

Missiles not keeping emigres from Israel

TEL AVIV (R) — Iraqi missile attacks have not stopped Soviet Jews from immigrating to Israel — about 4,000 have arrived since the Gulf war began a week ago. Gad Ben Ari, spokesman for the Jewish Agency responsible for bringing in the newcomers, said the daily rate since the war began — about 500 — was nearly the same as the rate in the first days of January. "The fact that missiles are falling on Israel and it is directly involved in the crisis has an effect on immigration at this time. Some have decided to postpone their arrival," Mr. Ben Ari told Reuters. Since Jan. 17, about 4,000 immigrants have arrived, several hundred of them from Ethiopia and rest from the Soviet Union, Mr. Ben-Ari said. In the past week, Iraq has attacked Israel four times with Scud missiles, killing three and wounding 124. About 800 immigrants, 115 from Ethiopia, arrived Thursday, Mr. Ben-Ari said. It was the highest rate for a single day since the war broke out. A record 34,000 immigrants came in December, almost all from the Soviet Union. About 200,000 immigrants arrived in 1990.

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Bessmertnykh to meet Baker on Gulf

WASHINGTON (R) — New Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh may meet soon with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, the State Department said Thursday. "It could well be," spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler told reporters, without elaboration. The new foreign minister was, until his promotion two weeks ago the Soviet ambassador to the United States. U.S. officials said he is expected to come to Washington soon to pack his bags and then return to Moscow and his new duties. There are plans for President George Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to hold a summit in Moscow on Feb. 11-13. Mr. Bush has threatened to cancel the meeting because of the Soviet crackdown against pro-independence forces in the Baltic republics. In recent years, the U.S. and Soviet foreign ministers have met in advance of each superpower summit and talks between Mr. Baker and Mr. Bessmertnykh would be in keeping with this. U.S. and Soviet arms negotiators have been meeting in Washington all week in an effort to finish a treaty slashing strategic nuclear weapons that is expected to be signed at the Moscow summit.

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Gulf war enters second week

Iraqi jets on offensive; U.S. concedes conflict could last months

Saddam tours frontlines, says allies will be punished

Combined agency dispatches

THE IRAQI AIR force went on the offensive for the first time Thursday in the seven-day-old Gulf war, and President Saddam Hussein told his frontline commanders that the American-led allies will never defeat Iraq or escape the punishment they deserve.

The White House said the Gulf war was likely to last months and that the American people should brace themselves for days when Iraqi forces score victories over the allies.

The Iraqi President Saddam visited the frontline and commanders told him that the allies out of "cowardice and fear" were avoiding a ground war and

relying on high-altitude bombing.

Allied warplanes pummeled Iraq for an eighth straight day Thursday.

Baghdad Radio said there had been more than 25 air raids by Thursday evening across Iraq and that ground defenses had shot down seven allied warplanes and missiles. It gave no details of the targets hit.

Quoting the armed forces general command's 19th communiqué, the radio said that 20 military aircraft had been flown from Israel to Saudi Arabia to join the allied attacks on Iraq. "We have ascertained that 20 aircraft from the Zionist entity have been flown to Saudi Arabia," the communiqué said. It said the development proved

that the allies have been so unsuccessful that they had to "call on the Zionist entity to participate in the conspiracy and aggression against Iraq and the Arab Nation."

Saudi Arabia announced one of its F-15 Eagles destroyed two Iraqi Mirages armed with Exocet missiles in a dogfight as they streaked down the eastern side of the Gulf.

But there was confusion over the incident.

The United States denied U.S. navy planes were involved.

Britain said the two planes destroyed were Soviet-built MIG 23s. The third, a Mirage, capable of carrying an Exocet missile, fled. Unconfirmed reports

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While the Iraqi side of the border with Jordan remains closed, there is a steady flow of Saudi and Kuwaiti nationals and Jordanian expatriates from Saudi Arabia across the border in the southeast. Picture shows a child standing in front of a car loaded with personal belongings at the border crossing (Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan).

Trebeil border remains closed

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Iraq maintained an almost total closure of its border with Jordan and various officials and informed sources offered conflicting accounts of the reasons behind the surprise Iraqi move, which appeared to have gone into effect midnight Tuesday.

Very few people — accountable in dozens — arrived at the Jordanian border post of Al Ruweished by late Thursday, sources at the frontier said.

Earlier, officials said they were informed by travellers that several thousand people were stranded at the Iraqi border post of Trebeil, 70 kilometres from Al Ruweished, and there was no immediate explanation to what appeared to be the selective approach the Iraqi have adopted in permitting border crossing.

Several reasons or theories

were offered by various sources. These included:

— The Iraqis clamped down on the border shortly after a bomb or missile attack by the allied forces killed three members of a bedouin family. Two small girls died on the spot and the other died on his way to hospital on the Jordanian side early Wednesday. Another wounded member of the family was undergoing treatment at Al Ruweished.

— The Iraqis had sealed off the border after one or several allied airmen shot down by Iraqi defences had eluded capture.

— The Iraqi authorities were discouraging people to drive across the border in view of an acute shortage of fuel in the country.

(A blanket suspension of all sale of fuel oil went into effect throughout Iraq Thursday in line with an Iraqi oil ministry

order.)

Several reasons or theories

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Oil pit ablaze in Kuwait; slick reported after Iraqi ships hit

Combined Agency dispatches

IRAQI TROOPS have set a pit of oil ablaze in Kuwait in an apparent bid to create a smokescreen over the Gulf war front, oil industry sources said Thursday.

Oil industry sources said aerial photographs of the Wafra oilfield in Kuwait showed black smoke billowing from crude burning in an evaporation pit normally used to collect water separated from oil pumped from underground.

"The Iraqis have apparently filled the evaporation pit with oil and set it on fire. It'll burn for a long time, depending on how much crude there is ... two or three weeks," one source said.

Some wellheads in the oilfield itself had been blown away and there were small fires, the sources said.

Bury they said it was clear from the photographs that these fires were not serious and would quickly burn themselves out. The burning pit was the size of

a football field but it was not clear how much crude it contained.

Gulf industry sources say the Iraqis have also set alight oil products storage tanks at two of Kuwait's three oil refineries on the emirate's coast.

Iraq earlier threatened to set the Gulf ablaze if attacked by multinational forces. One engineer who fled Kuwait in October said Iraq had planted mines at 300 oil wells there.

Oil industry sources say even if Iraq carried out its threat to demolish all Kuwait's oil wells there is not enough pressure in them to create flaming gushers that would burn indefinitely.

U.S. military sources say the smoke cloud from the burning crude could hamper military operations in the emirate.

Carried east by the wind, it caused black greasy rain over the Iranian coastal province of Bushehr, about 250 kilometres east of Kuwait, Tuesday. Gulf oil industry sources said

fires at storage tanks for jet fuel, kerosene and gas oil at Kuwait's Shuaiba and Mina Abdullah refineries were burning out of control.

Saudi officials reported two oil slicks are moving south off the coast of Kuwait, hours after Iraq said allied warplanes had attacked two Iraqi tankers, spilling "large quantities" of oil into the sea.

The Meteorological and Environmental Protection Agency of Saudi Arabia said one slick was spotted just off the coast of the Saudi town of Khafji on the border of Kuwait.

Another slick was heading south from Saudi Arabia's Safaniya off-shore oil field, the agency said.

A Saudi official said the oil slicks were about 1.6 kilometres wide. He said Saudi Arabian desalination and electrical plants along the coast were taking precautions against the slicks.

China reports contacts with Soviets over Gulf

Combined agency dispatches

CHINA SAID Thursday it was in contact with the Soviet Union on the Gulf war and the two countries were making efforts to find a peaceful settlement.

"Ever since the Gulf crisis broke out, China and the Soviet Union have maintained contacts," Foreign Ministry spokesman Li Zhaoxing told reporters.

"On the question of the Gulf, the two countries are willing to continue making their efforts with the international community to settle the conflict in a peaceful way," He did not elaborate.

He refused to comment on reports Chinese Premier Li Peng had proposed to Moscow that the two countries consult in seeking an end to the conflict.

Mr. Li made the proposal in a message to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, diplomats said earlier this week.

China was the only one of the five United Nations Security Council's permanent members not to support its resolution authorising the use of force against Iraq. It abstained while the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union backed the measure.

He declined to specify what China was doing to help to bring about a peaceful settlement, citing four appeals for restraint issued by Beijing soon after war broke out.

Reports that Iraq would use captured allied prisoners of war as human shields to deter air

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Iraqi envoy hits Japan

Combined agency dispatches

TOKYO (R) — Iraq's envoy to Tokyo said Thursday that Japan had become an enemy by announcing it would give \$9 billion in new aid to allied forces in the Gulf.

Iraq would shoot down any Japanese military plane sent to repatriate refugees, he said. Commercial planes airlifting refugees would not be attacked, he said.

"The present government has set the whole of Japan in a hostile position," Iraqi Ambassador to Japan Rashid Al Rifai told a news conference. "It is a hostile country."

"Any military vehicle would be a legitimate target. It might be an ally to get the Japanese army into the area," Rifai said.

On Thursday, the Japanese government said it would provide allied forces with \$9 billion to help defray the cost of the war in the Gulf. The pledge brings Japan's total commitment to the U.S.-led Gulf forces to \$11 billion.

It has said it will provide frontline Middle East countries hard hit by the crisis with \$2 billion.

Japan's role in the Gulf was against its constitution, Mr. Rifai said. "Japan could have played a very peaceful broker part instead of supporting the U.S. and its allies."

Kuwaiti ambassador to Tokyo, Abdul Aziz Al Sharikh welcomed Tokyo's new pledge. The new contribution "clearly shows that Japan not only realises her responsibilities among

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Ozal vows to hit back if Iraqi forces attack

Combined agency dispatches

ANKARA (R) — Turkish-based U.S. jets struck Iraq again Thursday and President Turgut Ozal, spurning a veiled Iraqi warning, vowed to hit back if Baghdad attacked.

"I can tell you what we have already said — every attack on Turkey will lead to a retaliatory attack. There's no doubt about that," he told Germany's ARD television.

"If we are not attacked we will not hit back. We ourselves will not attack. That's it."

Threatening unspecified consequences, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz Wednesday accused Turkey of unjustified aggression and Mr. Ozal of subservience to America.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Kurtcebe Alptemecin has not reacted to the note from Mr. Aziz. Iraq's first public response to the waves of U.S. planes flying virtually round-the-clock from Incirlik base since last Friday.

Reuters photographer Fatih Saribas said more U.S. combat planes had mounted an overnight raid from Incirlik only hours after Aziz delivered his stiffly-worded complaint.

American aircraft took off on at least one more mission on Thursday, returning in the early afternoon, but activity at the base appeared less intense than on previous days, Mr. Saribas added.

There was no immediate sign that Ankara would respond to the Iraqi threat by expelling diplomats or individual Iraqis.

"Perhaps the Turks will decide not to poke the rattlesnake any more," one Western diplomat said.

Turkey has insisted it has no designs on Iraqi territory and no plans to launch a ground assault on its Muslim neighbour.

Sources close to Ozal said any Iraqi attack on Turkey would elicit a proportionate response, not all-out war.

They said he was confident that U.S.-made Patriot air defence missiles deployed at Incirlik and Diyarbakir further east could neutralise the threat from Iraq's Scud missiles.

Two Dutch-supplied Patriot missiles, launched after their computer wrongly detected an

(Continued on page 4)

Palestinians suffering under Israeli curfew

Combined agency dispatches

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Western aid organisations appealed to foreign governments Thursday to press Israel to lift the week-long curfew in the occupied territories, saying the confinement constituted a human rights violation.

They said the curfew, clamped on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on Jan. 17, has created food shortages, severely limited medical treatment and caused drastic economic hardships to the 1.7 million Palestinians living there.

An army spokesman denied the charges, saying the curfew was imposed on an "belligerent population" in order to prevent nationalist demonstrations and pro-Iraqi attacks on Israelis.

Many Palestinians view Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as a champion of their fight for independence.

The co-ordinating committee of international Non-Government Organisations, an umbrella organisation of some 30 groups who monitor the situation in the occupied territories, said their complaints were based on reports from field workers.

The committee reported that eyewitnesses had seen Israeli soldiers open fire without warning and beat Palestinian curfew violators in the Bethlehem and Nablus areas.

It also said that while some clinics and hospitals have been allowed to open, many medical personnel have been prevented from getting to them by the curfew.

"For seven days now, men, women and children in the West

Bank and Gaza Strip have been under what is, in effect, house arrest," said Donald Mansir, the director of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine.

The prolonged curfew has prevented Palestinian labourers, who have already been hurt by the three-year uprising against Israeli occupation, from reaching their jobs and has led to money and food shortages.

"There is no starvation, but there are key shortages of essential commodities such as baby milk formula, sugar and flour," said Alex Pollak of the United Nations Association in International Service.

An army spokesman said he knew of no food shortages and that all health services were

available.

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Germany, France rush to show their solidarity with Israel

Combined agency dispatches

GERMAN FOREIGN Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher arrived in Israel in a show of solidarity Thursday, saying the Jewish state could rely on Germany as it faces a "deadly threat" from Iraqi missiles.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger held his third meeting with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir since arriving last Saturday. Mr. Shamir's office said only that they discussed the Gulf crisis and the missile threat.

It was described as their last meeting before the U.S. official returns to the United States, possibly Friday.

French President Francois Mitterrand also sent a personal envoy to Israel to express "sympathy and solidarity" following Iraq's missile attacks on the Jewish state.

Mr. Mitterrand dispatched Thierry de Beauce, deputy foreign minister for cultural affairs,

to meet with Mr. Shamir and Foreign Minister David Levy, according to the French foreign ministry.

Iraq has launched four Scud missile attacks against Israel since Friday.

The first three Iraqi attacks sent missiles into residential areas of Tel Aviv and Haifa, killing one person directly but causing the deaths of at least six people from heart attacks or accidents with their gas masks.

Mr. Genscher, who carried with him \$166 million in "emergency humanitarian aid," stressed that Germany had a "special responsibility towards... Israel and the Israeli people."

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had dispatched veteran diplomat Genscher at short notice after mounting criticism in Israel of Germany's reluctant support of the U.S.-led war effort.

Israeli officials also have accused German scientists and industrialists of helping Iraq develop the chemical weapons that

it has threatened to use against Israel.

Mr. Genscher, who was met by Mr. Levy on arrival, praised Israel for not retaliating after being struck by missiles three times.

"We are aware that Israel is facing a deadly threat. You and your government met this challenge with a great sense of responsibility," Mr. Genscher told Levy.

Mr. Genscher and Mr. Levy later toured two sites in the greater Tel Aviv area where Iraqi Scud missiles struck.

Germany said Thursday it was expelling 28 Iraqi diplomats from Bonn and Berlin. Officials said the action was taken to prevent the diplomats from helping "terrorists."

All 14 diplomats at Iraq's mission in Berlin have been told to leave, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Hans Schumacher. Fourteen of 18 diplomats at

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Rafsanjani: Iran, Syria should seek to end war

Combined agency dispatches

IRANIAN PRESIDENT Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said Thursday Iran and Syria must act to end the Gulf war and prevent further destruction in Iraq and Kuwait.

The Iranian news agency IRNA said Mr. Rafsanjani, meeting Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam in Tehran, repeated Iraq's call for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and foreign military forces leave the region.

"The president said that both Syria and Iran must... launch efforts to prevent further damage to the Muslim nations of Kuwait and Iraq. He also said that the present regional conditions must be used in the interest of the Palestinians and the Islamic community," IRNA said.

In a separate report, IRNA quoted parliamentary sources as saying Parliament Speaker Mehdi Karubi would shortly announce a "comprehensive peace initiative." It gave no details.

Syria, which backed Iran in its 1980-88 war with Iraq, has sent thousands of troops to Saudi Arabia to join the U.S.-led forces ranged against Iraq.

Mr. Rafsanjani's government has condemned the allied forces' intensive air raids on Iraq over the past week, but spurned calls by some hardliners to join Iraq in a holy war against the United States.

Mr. Khaddam, who arrived in Tehran Wednesday with Syrian

Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa, also stressed Iranian-Syrian cooperation and said Israel must not be allowed to profit from the "catastrophe."

Mr. Sharaa told Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on Wednesday that the Jewish state, hit by several Iraqi missiles since Friday, was exploiting the war to strengthen itself with more American financial and military aid, IRNA said.

An Iranian newspaper, the English-language Kayhan International, said in an editorial Thursday that Turkey should not become further involved in the war. The Turks have allowed allied planes to stage air raids on Iraq from bases in Turkey.

"If Turkey decides to despatch its troops into Iraq with a covetous eye on its Kirkuk province, this would certainly only further aggravate the situation and prompt a strong reaction by the neighbouring countries, including Islamic Republic of Iran," the editorial said.

Indian move

Combined agency dispatches

Indian Foreign Minister Vidya Charan Shukla is due to leave for Tehran Friday to consult with Iran on shaping a peace initiative for the Gulf by the non-aligned movement (NAM).

"It is part of the process of consultations we have undertaken with other members of NAM with a view to finding a peaceful solution to the Gulf

crisis," the minister said.

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Fear gives way to gloom in Abu Dhabi

By Philip Shehadi
Reuters

ABU DHABI — The blood-booms and sirens of war have so far spared the tranquil Emirates of the lower Gulf, but fear has given way to gloom over stagnant business and the region's uncertain future.

Residents of this lush, modern capital of the United Arab Emirates, with its glass skyscrapers and flowering gardens, have put aside their masking tape and dug into food and water anxiously hoarded before war broke out a week ago.

But if Iraqi Scud missile launchers 800 kilometres away have proved not to be a threat, the war's psychological and economic shock waves have spared no one.

"Much of the tension has gone," said Ron McCulloch, an Abu Dhabi-based doctor and longtime resident of the Emirate. "But it's been replaced by sadness."

Luxury hotels, shops and airports look emptier than they have been at any time since they were built after the 1970s oil boom. The war has punctured business confidence and burst the biggest economic boom in a decade.

"Nothing has happened to

cause panic, but we expect the local economy to suffer," said Sultan Nasser Al Suweidi, managing director of the Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank.

"There will be a recession, although maybe not as serious as the major recession of the early 1980s," he said, referring to a downturn caused by falling world oil prices.

Officials are at pains to project an aura of normalcy and went ahead with the first Abu Dhabi International Fair — inaugurated on Jan. 16 one hour after the expiry of the U.N. deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait or face war. Some 400 companies from 23 countries are taking part.

"It was swimming against the tide, but we wanted to show people that everything in the UAE is normal," said Ali Al Mesaid Al Nayadi, deputy director of the exhibition department at the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

But clearly there are exceptional times. An endless stream of military cargo planes drone above fair ground balloons. Bags are carefully searched at the entrance.

Resident huddle over radios and are mesmerised night and day by live war coverage from

Cable News Network, broadcast through local TV stations.

Abu Dhabi authorities have introduced draconian security measures to prevent any attack by Iraqi sympathisers, a threat the U.S. embassy considers "significant."

Trucks armed with machine guns patrol city streets and traffic is routinely tied up for inspections of boots and glove compartments.

In neighbouring Dubai, British and American banks have three times been evacuated after telephone bomb threats that proved to be hoaxes.

Many residents had bought extra supplies of masking tape to protect windows from the blast of explosions, but never used them.

Camel races, the local passion, proceed on schedule but they are no longer televised. Dubai has cancelled international squash and golf tournaments set for February.

Beyond the immediate pain of war UAE citizens are deeply anxious over the future of their region, one of the world's wealthiest and most vulnerable.

"The age of innocence is over," said one UAE journalist. "We are going to have to reconsider many things in our societies."

France expands role in Gulf war

PARIS (AP) — France widened its participation in the war against Iraq Thursday when French jet-fighters attacked positions within Iraq for the first time.

The attack was one of two raids against Iraqi military targets Thursday morning, the French military announced. The other was against Iraqi troops entrenched in Kuwait.

The raid on Iraqi territory by French air force Jaguars was against mechanised units of Iraq's elite Republican Guards near the Iraq-Kuwait border, the military said in a statement.

It was the first time for French jets to cross into Iraq since the war began a week ago. The six previous French sorties before Thursday have only been against Iraqi positions in Kuwait.

The French jets carried out the raids from their base in Saudi Arabia between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. (0600-0700 GMT) and all returned safely, the military communiqué said.

For the attacks on Iraqi soil, "our Jaguars received support from allied aircraft," the statement said. It did not give details on the target or the type of support extended by the allies. Jaguars, however, have less sophisticated radar jamming capabilities than American planes such as EA-6B Prowlers or EF-111 Ravens.

"Simultaneously, our Mirage 2000s took part in the protection of the entire aerial operation," the statement said. The supersonic Mirage 2000s are combat interceptors also used for reconnaissance.

In the face of Iraqi anti-aircraft fire, the attacking French jets "used an adaptive technique," said the statement, without giving details.

The other raid was against an Iraqi artillery site in southern Kuwait.

The military communiqué did not describe damage inflicted on the Republican Guards, the cream of Iraq's troops, or on the artillery site.

It also did not describe how the Mirages took part in the attack, but they were believed to be covering the Jaguars from hostile fire.

"The role of the Mirage 2000 is to neutralise any attacks on the aircraft carrying out raids, to escort them and allow them to drop their bombs," said Bernard Capillon, former air force chief of staff, on the television network La Cinq.

"And if a pilot is hit and ejects, the Mirage 2000 can afford some protection to the pilot until he is rescued," General Capillon said.

France had initially said its mission was the liberation of Kuwait and would not hit targets within Iraq. But after conflicting signals from French officials and military commanders, President Francois Mitterrand said Sunday that France "does not rule out, if the case arises, going into Iraq."

Missile sound-and-light show becoming evening fixture

DHAHRAN (R) — The double boom of U.S. Patriot missiles fired at incoming Iraqi Scuds is becoming as much part of the evening as the sunset in this oil-rich town at the brink of the Gulf war.

Four nights out of the last five, the sound-and-light show began with a pair of Patriots blasting off within a minute from a key air base, a sound that can be heard kilometres away.

They streak across the sky like flaming orange comets, sometimes ending in an aerial explosion when they hit a Scud, the Soviet-made missile that has been the most visible Iraqi weapon of the war's first week.

Within seconds, sirens start wailing throughout Dhahran and wardens with loudspeakers hustle people to sealed shelters.

At first, all who could scurried to the shelters with gas masks and chemical protection suits.

But all Scuds aimed at Saudi Arabia have so far been shot down or allowed to land harmlessly, officials said.

Now those headed for the shelters walk instead of run. They take books, radios and laptop computers to pass the time in the stuffy downstairs rooms. One military foursome plays cards, talking through their

gas masks to make their bids. In the Dhahran International Hotel, the nerve centre for military communications in northern Saudi Arabia, the shelters have become downright festive. American sporting events blare on armed services radio and there are free sandwiches if the alert lasts long enough.

Many people have started to forgo the shelters altogether to glimpse the aftermath of the missile exchange or collect some Scud debris as a souvenir.

A burning chunk of missile the size of a coffee cup pierced the roof of a home in the Saudi Aramco oil compound on Tues-

day night and landed in a resident's living room.

At Al Khobar near Dhahran, pedestrians may be more at ease from cars speeding home when the sirens start than from falling missile debris.

Most people wear dark-green gas mask pouches over their shoulders or around their waists like cumbersome belts. But the streets are busy even an hour after the missiles fire.

Ali Omar, who manages a jewelry store in Al Khobar, said there are fewer customers since the war started but he has no plans to close up and leave town. "This is our home," he said. "Where would we go?"

Ozal slams Germany as rich but unreliable ally

BONN (R) — Turkish President Turgut Ozal condemned Germany Thursday as a rich but unreliable ally which had shirked its responsibilities in the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Ozal, speaking in an interview with Germany's ARD television network, contended that Turkey was now under threat of an Iraqi attack by chemical and biological weapons which German firms had supplied to Baghdad.

But Germany, protected by NATO for 40 years from the then Soviet threat, was now unwilling to follow alliance rules and stand by Turkey in its time of need, he charged.

"Why does Germany forget all this?" he asked after noting that Turkey had come under strong pressure from its Soviet neighbour over its commitment to the alliance defending Germany.

"I think Germany has become so rich that it has completely lost its fighting spirit," Mr. Ozal said.

Bonn has sent 18 fighter jets to Turkey to boost Ankara's defences but many politicians say that is the limit and Germany should not do more even if its NATO ally is attacked.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl has stubbornly refused to join a public debate — seen by many diplomats here as agonised hairsplitting — over exactly what kind of Iraqi attack on Turkey would justify a German part in a NATO rescue mission.

Opposition leaders, who like most Germans polled oppose any part in the war, say Bonn should not fight if Iraq attacked to retaliate for U.S. air strikes flown from Turkish bases.

Mr. Ozal's blast followed loud complaints from Jews here that Germany, which has no troops in the Gulf, was shirking its moral responsibility to support Israel and the allied war effort against Iraq.

Stung by those charges, Bonn despatched Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Israel Thursday with a pledge of 250 million marks (\$166 million) in humanitarian aid.

Before leaving Bonn, Mr. Genscher told a radio interviewer Germany was a loyal NATO member but would not make any decision on coming to Ankara's aid before an Iraqi attack.

NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner, a former Bonn defence minister, raised a storm here by saying over the weekend Germany would certainly have to help if Turkey was attacked.

Even leading members of Mr. Kohl's Christian Democratic

Party joined the opposition in arguing against aiding Ankara. Mr. Ozal touched another open wound by saying Germany would also be responsible if Iraq attacked Turkey with chemical or biological weapons.

"Who gave them to (Iraq)?" he asked. "You are responsible. You should come and help us and take your responsibility."

Bonn announced Wednesday a further tightening of its export rules to stop firms supplying Baghdad with arms or other material like pesticide plants that could be used for military purposes.

NATO boosts security

NATO stepped up security at its Brussels headquarters Thursday, one day after Iraq accused Turkey of unjustified aggression by allowing U.S. aircraft to raid Iraqi territory from Turkish bases.

Guards outside the sprawling NATO complex began checking car licence plates and asking for their identity cards as the alliance's staff arrived for work.

NATO never comments publicly on security measures.

Iraq warned Turkey Wednesday of possible "consequences" that could result from allowing U.S. planes to launch raids from the Incirlik airbase.

Iraq has also called for attacks on U.S. and allied interests around the globe.

The 16-nation Western alliance has pledged to defend Turkey if it is attacked and has sent 42 warplanes to southeastern Turkey to deter any possible offensive. Some NATO allies have also sent Patriot air defence missiles to the area.

Turkey has moved troops to its border with Iraq and President Ozal said last week it now had 180,000 troops in the south-east facing eight Iraqi divisions. Witnesses said more tanks and troops were continuing to deploy there this week.

NATO has said it is not planning to beef up its forces in Turkey, the only alliance member bordering Iraq, and wants to keep a low profile to the Gulf war.

"We're making contingency plans for defending Turkey if it's attacked by Iraq, but we have no current plans for strengthening alliance forces down there," said one military source.

"We don't want to do anything that could be construed as provocative right now. The Gulf war is not in our theatre of operations and we have no direct involvement."

Expelled Iraqi envoy leaves Manila

MANILA (AP) — An Iraqi diplomat expelled after an alleged botched bombing left the Philippines Thursday, denying links to the weekend incident but pledging "to be a fighter" when he returns home.

First Secretary Muwafak Al Ani, 41, his wife Munjiaglaa, 35, and sons Omar, 10, and Mustafa, 8, left for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, five days after a bombing near a U.S. library that killed one Iraqi and injured another.

Mr. Ani, his wife and children flashed "V" for victory signs and shouted "Long live Saddam Hussein" as they boarded a Malaysian airlines jet. He said they planned to travel on to Tehran, Iran, and make their way to Baghdad.

"I finished my task as a diplomat," he told reporters. "I'm going to be a fighter."

Last Monday, Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus said Mr. Ani was ordered expelled because of "strong evidence" linking him to Saturday's blast near the Thomas Jefferson Cultural Centre.

Two Iraqi brothers also were arrested in the case and were to be deported Friday. A third Iraqi, Abdul Khadim Saad, was injured and was being held at a police hospital.

On Thursday, military chief of staff Lieutenant-General Rodolfo Biazon said intelligence agents were watching seven Iraqis and other foreigners in two undisclosed groups for possible "terrorist" links.

Mr. Biazon said they had attracted attention because of "the manner of entry" into the country and contacts with people suspected of "terrorist" links.

On Thursday, the Los Angeles Times said Western intelligence agencies have uncovered leads to what they believe is a network of activists trained in Iraq.

The newspaper said clues to the conspiracy were uncovered as a result of the Manila bombing.

Mr. Ani denied involvement in the bombing and claimed he was ordered to leave "to shut me up."

Mr. Ani had appeared frequently on Philippine television expressing Iraq's views on the Gulf war.

"There is a big difference between terrorism and fighting the enemy," Mr. Ani said. "I don't consider the bombing was conducted by the Iraqi government. I challenge everybody here to produce any evidence. ... I have been a fighter while I was a diplomat also."

Immigration officials said police also were searching for two Palestinians in connection with the bombing.

The bomb exploded Saturday across the street from the Jefferson Centre. Police said it went off prematurely as another Iraqi, Ahmad H. Ahmad, was setting the timer.

Ahmad's body was dismembered and hurled on top of a house about 10 metres away. Philippine officials said Ahmad and Saad entered the country last month and planned to leave for Bangkok, Thailand, after planting the bomb.

Khartoum ratifies Sharia criminal code

KHARTOUM (R) — The ruling military council and cabinet have ratified a new criminal code based on Islamic Sharia law for residents of mainly Muslim northern Sudan.

Sudan's military leader, Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Al Bashir, announced in a new year address that Sharia law would be applied immediately throughout Muslim regions of Africa's largest country.

War-ravaged southern Sudan, populated by Christians and animists, is exempted from Sharia law.

The official Sudan News Agency (SUNA) reported Thursday that the new criminal code derived from religious law was approved Wednesday by the 15-member military council and the cabinet, both of which are headed by Gen. Bashir.

Gen. Bashir, who took power in a coup in June 1989, reshuffled

the cabinet Sunday, dismissing three ministers who had either opposed or not fully supported implementation of Sharia law.

The justice minister and attorney general, retired Major-General Ahmad Mahmoud Hassan, was quoted by SUNA as saying the new law gives due consideration to the protection of privacy and upholds the human rights of those who commit crimes.

Gen. Hassan said the code provides for the amputation of limbs for thieves and stoning to death for adultery, but added that such punishments were not being carried out so far.

Chief Justice Jalal Ali Lufi said that although the law would not affect Christians and animists in southern Sudan, those in Khartoum and other parts of northern Sudan would be governed by the law, SUNA said.

Unbelievers are fighting unbelievers — Iran cleric

TEHRAN (R) — The struggle over Kuwait is a war between unbelievers, a leading Muslim cleric declared Thursday in a parliamentary debate that underlined Iran's neutrality between former enemy Iraq and the "Great Satan" America.

The debate brought sharp criticism of hardliner Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, who called on Sunday for a holy war against the United States.

One conservative told him that if he felt sympathy for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein he should go and join the Iraqi army.

Mr. Mohtashemi, a former interior minister out of favour with President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's now dominant moderates pulled back from any suggestion he was backing Iraq.

"No one supports Saddam Hussein," he said. "In fact, he should be punished. I spoke only of a defensive jihad (holy war)."

But he restated his anti-American and anti-Western views.

"All the problems of Muslims originate from the Great Satan, — the USA," he said. "American positions all over the world must be attacked. Relations with Britain and Kuwait must be cut."

The debate was broadcast live on Tehran Radio.

Iraq has sought support by appealing to Muslim sympathies, but Iraq's ruling Baath Party is historically a secular rather than a religious movement.

In Iran, there are some signs of admiration for Iraq's challenge to the United States.

Dream of Arab unity revived amidst war

By Denis D. Gray
The Associated Press

AMMAN — As Western powers rain destruction in Iraq, more and more Arabs are dreaming an old dream. It's of a 200-million-strong union stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf that could repel all foreign incursions.

But the dream is troubled by age-old Arab rivalries, highlighted by the war against Iraq which pits Arabs against Arabs.

The war has also served to revive pan-Arab feelings, exhibited in emotionally charged protests against foreign "Crusaders." And President Saddam Hussein, while portrayed in the West as a brutal dictator, has been hailed by millions as a hero fighting for the entire Arab World.

"Me and my brother against my cousin. Me and my cousin against the stranger," goes an Arabic proverb.

Some in the West fear it could become operative in this war when countries like Egypt and Syria find themselves allied with the United States against their Arab brethren.

"We are at a fantastic turning point. Will there be a fusion in the Arab World or will the schism widen?" asks Fawaz Toukan of the University of Jordan. "It probably depends on how deep the wounds will be, how humiliating the defeat — not to Iraq but the masses supporting it."

He and other analysts cite powerful, "primordial factors" that bind the Arabs — culture, language, religion, stirring memories of golden ages when Arab power and intellect dominated from Spain to Central Asia.

But they describe a weak modern Arab World, made so by the centuries of Western colonialism, exploitation and dictation of national boundaries that have sparked inter-Arab feuds and accentuated differences.

From the humiliation and vulnerability — feelings President Saddam has tapped so well — come calls for Arab unity.

"This crisis hasn't created pan-Arabism, it has just dramatised it. Arabs have always acted this way in times of crisis," says Saadeddin Ibra-

him, a political scientist at the American University in Cairo.

"I think there will be a new Arab Order, with or without an Iraqi defeat. The old formulas will have to be drastically revised," he said in a telephone interview.

Visions of pan-Arabism after the war vary widely.

Some predict governments which backed the U.S.-led multinational force will be toppled and a militant, anti-Western Arab solidarity will emerge. Others see fundamentalist Islam waiting in the wings for an opportunity to force an even wider union of the world's 900 million Muslims.

A more benign view is that the destruction of Iraq will shock Arabs into following a democratic path towards economic and cultural cooperation and then political unity along the lines of the European Community.

"Democracy is a prerequisite for Arab unity. We cannot have Arab unity when we have countries like Egypt, Libya and Syria run at the whims of their leaders," said Dr. Fawaz, a U.S.-educated

expert on Arab civilisation.

Arab analysts opposed to the current Western intervention say the regimes of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states must also be swept aside, alleging they have widened Arab rifts by their disproportionate wealth and unwillingness to adequately share it with less fortunate Arab states.

Kamel Abu Jaber, a political scientist and Jordan Times columnist, describes Arab unity as "both a myth and a reality."

"For very few moments in history were the Arabs united... in one nation. The Arabs are one people in 22 entities," he said. "The Arab is screwed up between his heart and his mind (one says unity, the other separation)."

Modern Arab nationalism began to take shape in the mid-19th century. Influenced by nation-building in Europe, it also came in reaction to harsh rule by the Ottoman Turks against whom the Arabs revolted in 1916.

Between the two world wars, the strongest centres of pan-Arabism were Baghdad

and Syria. The Baathist Party, with Arab unity as its centrepiece, was born there and exists today in both Iraq and Syria despite their adversary relationship.

Gamal Abdul Nasser, the charismatic Egyptian leader, expanded the geography of Arab unity to include 20-plus nations from North Africa to the Gulf.

Although the issue of Israel remained a potent rallying cry, some academics say pan-Arabism dwindled following Abdul Nasser's death in 1970 when a broader pan-Islamic movement focused on the faith rather than territory gathered strength.

President Saddam, whatever his ambitions for self and Iraq, has long espoused a pan-Arab position. Typical is a now-ironic 1985 speech to a delegation from Kuwait:

"As Arabs we all have to live under one umbrella, sharing one identity and providing the required protection and true interaction for joint action, whether it be for building up or for facing enemies and taking risks."

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Moscow denies advisers still aiding Iraq

MOSCOW (R) — The Soviet Union denied a British radio report Thursday that some of its military advisers were helping to maintain sophisticated equipment for the Iraqis. "The last Soviet military adviser left Iraq Jan. 9. This report is not true," Defence Ministry spokesman Valery Myasnikov said. "I want to state firmly that there are no military experts left in Iraq. It is not accurate information at all." Foreign Ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin commented, Mr. Churkin told a news conference on Wednesday that all Soviet advisers from Iraq, formerly a close Kremlin ally, had left and only 41 embassy staff remained in the country. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), quoting information given to academic analysts by the U.S. government, said earlier that up to 100 Soviet advisers had chosen to stay behind in Iraq helping maintain Soviet-supplied equipment. President Mikhail Gorbachev denounced Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait and has supported the U.S.-led military force fighting to expel Iraqi troops from the emirate.

Italy orders 700 immigrants out

ROME (R) — Italy, worried about the possibility of attacks by pro-Iraqi extremists Thursday ordered the deportation of more than 700 illegal immigrants. Police staged a dawn raid on a former bakery where over 2,000 immigrants have sought temporary shelter and took 1,600 — mostly Pakistanis and North Africans — away for questioning. More than 700 did not have residence permits and were served with deportation orders, police said. City council officials said the operation was in line with measures taken to tighten controls on foreigners since the start of the Gulf war. But social workers accused police of using the Gulf war as a pretext to evict squatters from the factory, where immigrants fought a bloody battle with the security forces in November. Some 50,000 police and soldiers have been deployed to protect military installations throughout Italy since last week. Security has also been reinforced at embassies, airports, railway stations and other possible targets.

Senegal's troops in Gulf 'not tourists'

DAKAR (R) — Senegal's 500 troops in the anti-Iraq coalition in the Gulf are there as soldiers not tourists, Armed Forces Minister Medoune Fall said in an interview published Thursday. "If we have sent career soldiers to the Gulf it is to fight for a good cause. They are not tourists," Mr. Fall told the Dakar weekly Sud Hebdo. Mr. Fall said the contingent was stationed beside Moroccan troops in forward positions and under Saudi unified command. Saudi Arabia had transported the contingent from Senegal and was paying its running costs. In remarks reported by the Senegalese news agency APS he denied the government had received 30 billion CFA francs (\$120 million) from Riyadh to join the U.S.-led forces. Two other mainly Muslim West African states, Niger and Sierra Leone, have also contributed units to the coalition.

Mubarak ridicules Iraqi missiles

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak ridiculed Iraq's Scud missiles as children's fireworks and appealed to Saddam Hussein on Thursday to pledge to withdraw from Kuwait. Addressing a special joint session of parliament's two houses, Mubarak said that while "political missiles" fired at Israel might spark some demonstrations abroad, they could not win the Gulf war or the support of nations. Iraq's "firecrackers" aimed at the Jewish state did not help the Palestinian cause but only won Israel more world sympathy, extra U.S. arms and aid, he said. "I say in the name of the Egyptian people: We do not stop in these moments from international efforts to stop this tragedy if Iraq commits itself to withdraw from Kuwait and restore its sovereignty," Mubarak said. He accused the Iraqi leader of using the Palestinian cause for his own interest, to spark Arab sentiment and cover up his occupation of Kuwait.

Support for war grows among French

PARIS (R) — French public support for war in the Gulf has grown since the outbreak of hostilities, according to an opinion poll published Thursday. The poll, in the daily newspaper Le Parisien Libre, showed 70 per cent of the French public approved France's participation in the war compared with 62 per cent on Jan. 18, the day after the conflict started. Seventeen per cent were against the war compared to 24 per cent last week. The remainder had no opinion. France has about 12,000 soldiers and airmen in Saudi Arabia and its air force units have operated daily against Iraqi troops.

Spain sends aid to Turkey refugees

MADRID (AP) — A Spanish air force military transport plane left Thursday for Ankara, Turkey, ferrying Spanish Red Cross aid for thousands fleeing villages near Turkey's southeast border with Iraq. The cargo valued at \$350,000 included tents, blankets, laboratory, nonperishable food, plasma and a blood analysis village residents has fled inland in Turkey over fears of an Iraqi attack on Turkey for its support of U.S.-led multinational forces. The ministry spokesman said the C-130 Hercules aircraft also is scheduled to stop over in Damascus to evacuate an estimated 50 Spanish nationals from Jordan and Syria. The same plane had declined an earlier Spanish offer to be evacuated prior to the outbreak of the Gulf war a week ago. The aircraft is scheduled to land in Spain Saturday, the spokesman said.

EMBASSY OF INDIA, AMMAN REPUBLIC DAY

To mark the Republic Day of India, a flag hoisting ceremony will take place on Saturday, January 26, 1991 at 10:00 a.m. at the embassy of India, first circle, Jabal Amman. All Indians are cordially invited to attend the ceremony.

Prince Hassan urges end to hostilities

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has urged all parties in the ongoing Gulf war to halt all military operations and to leave the issue to the U.N. Security Council to deal with peacefully.

In an interview with the American television network CBS the Prince said the world lost the first chance to end the Gulf crisis peacefully before the war but it was not late for an intervention by the U.N. secretary-general to deal with now.

"I think that the whole region will be traumatised politically, psychologically, economically, socially by what is happening today unless and until this Eastern Europe is given the day that Eastern Europe was given of looking at people transnationally," Prince Hassan said in the interview.

"It is time that this region was looked at transnationally, the migration of people to Israel, at the same time the recognition of the fact that these people are migrants, refugees, displaced persons. But there are also people of these categories as the Palestinian or the Lebanese or others. It's only through this approach of people mattering that Jordan and other peoples can survive. But to talk about the status quo built on the state system is a very hollow theme particularly if that state system is maintained by dynamics and force

of arms," the Prince said.

"There can be no regional order because a new regional order will be much like the old one if it is only built on weapons," the Prince emphasised.

On the possibility of reaching a ceasefire in the Gulf, Prince Hassan said "at this point with war (reaching) up to its highest level — who can get in and say stop in the middle of all this?"

He added that the U.N. secretary-general's appeal to stop fighting should not be made only to the Iraqis. "I would prefer to see that appeal made to all parties to stop hostilities not as a moratorium by one side, but to all parties in order to put an end to escalation and the continuing devastation. It has to be enforced by someone as the secretary-general and the Security Council has to take it seriously," the Prince said.

Whether this ceasefire is enforced now or in the foreseeable future, the Prince said, "nobody is listening to us for the moment but we are trying."

On Jordan's worry about possible Israeli retaliation to Iraq's Scud missile attacks, the Prince said: "Our concern is very clear, that the Iraqis have been warning that they would attack strategic allies of the U.S. for some weeks now. They implemented what they have said and of course we are



appalled by the loss in civilian casualties in either scenario. The possibility of drawing a non-combatant into the war is there. In the case of Israel we have a country with the means to respond. In our case we can't even shoot down missiles," the Prince said.

Prince Hassan expressed Jordan's worry about a massive influx of evacuees with the possibility of having many casualties among them.

"It is very likely that there are 750,000 predicted evacuees before the war and, up to two million potentially, particularly if they have walking casualties," the Prince said.

"Jordan is today facing mild malnutrition... lack of medicine and specialisations required in hospitals particularly for phosphorous, napalm wounds," he said.

Kilani denounces U.S. aggression

AMMAN (Petra) — Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Ibrahim Zeid Al Kilani Thursday denounced the United States-led aggression against Iraq, saying that the Gulf crisis is an inter-Arab issue that should be solved within the Arab house, as has been repeatedly stated by His Majesty King Hussein.

In an interview with the Cable News Network (CNN), Kilani voiced deep regret over U.S. attacks on Iraq, saying that it has used its technology to destroy mankind and to rekindle feelings of enmity among the world nations.

Kilani expressed deep concern over the attacks on Baghdad saying that Baghdad is the land of scholars (ulamas) and leaders and a city of long history in human civilisation, and expressed astonishment at the U.S. attack against Iraq. He called on

the American people to prevent its government from pushing its army to kill the Iraqi people and children and to resort to dialogue, rather than military confrontation to establish peace. Kilani also called on the American people to respect peoples' aspirations in obtaining freedom and achieving unity.

He called on America to act in harmony with the principles of freedom, which it upholds, and said it should apply such principles to all nations everywhere, rather than to apply it only to Americans and deny it others.

Kilani praised the position of His Majesty King Hussein and said the King's position reflected that of the Jordanian people. Kilani pointed out that Jordan will defend itself against any aggression wherever the sources of that aggression might be.

Jordan, EC sign JD 1.6m agreement

AMMAN — The European Community and the government of Jordan Thursday signed an agreement under which Jordan will receive a grant of ECU 1.6 million (approximately JD 1.6 million) to further develop and implement Jordan's medium term education strategy on the secondary and vocational levels, thereby sustaining the labour force's competitive advantage through qualitative improvements of the existing education system, the EC commission said in a statement.

The grant, provided under the third financial protocol to the EC Jordan cooperation agreement, represents the European Community's contribution to the \$40 million 1988 World Bank Seventh Education Project. The Education Improvement Project, an integral component of the World Bank's project, will be carried out by the Ministry of Education, and will provide technical assistance and training fellowships in Europe in line with the following objectives:

- To introduce cost-effective in-service training.
- To increase the availability and the use of appropriate teaching materials.
- To improve the responsiveness of vocational training to labour market needs.
- To strengthen educational management planning as well as measurement and evaluation of education quality, with a view to back up the far-reaching educational reform programme launched in 1988.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Planning Dr. Khaled Amin Abdullah on behalf of the government, and by the Ambassador of the European Commission to Jordan, Mr. Christian D. Falkowski.

Tawjihi students resume exams

AMMAN (J.T.) — Tawjihi students Thursday went back to the examination halls to resume examinations following a break of six days due to the outbreak of the Gulf war.

Ministry of Education officials said that 62,748 students will be taking their last examination for this term Saturday covering the rest of subjects required for the examination set by the ministry.

The students taking their examinations at 877 halls around the country are sitting for the literary, scientific, commercial, industrial, nursing and hotel management streams.

Ministry officials said that the results of the examinations for the mid-year term could be announced by the middle of next month.

Arab trade unionists call on the masses to support Iraq

AMMAN (Petra) — The International Federation of Arab Trade Unions Thursday called on the Arab masses to confront the American-Zionist aggression against Iraq, and to organise marches, and sit-ins to protest this brutal aggression.

In a statement issued at the conclusion of a press conference held here Thursday, the federation stressed that the Iraqi battle was the battle of the whole Arab Nation, and that it was designed to safeguard the nation's unity, sovereignty and pride.

The statement called on all the Arab masses to live up to the historical responsibility warranted by them at this critical time.

"Arab masses everywhere are called upon to exercise pressures on their governments to stand by Iraq in its battle, because it is defending national Arab security and the Arab land," it said.

The statement called on all international labour federations, the United Nations agencies, including the U.N. Security Council to put pressure on the United States and its allies to put an end to the war and to find a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis.

Secretary General of the Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions Abdul Halim Khaddam called on the Jordanian public to rally behind the leadership of the country and to increase production and form committees in factories and residential areas.

Athem, Khatib coordinate services

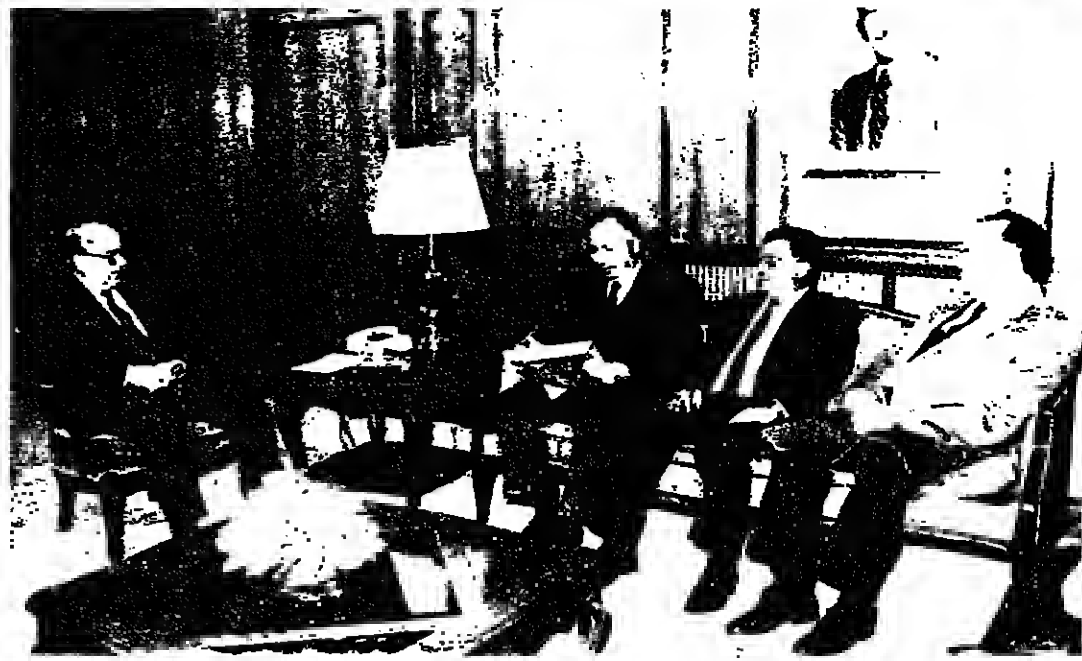
AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Yusef Al Athem Thursday stressed the importance of integrating the efforts made by the Ministry of Social Development and those made by the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS).

Al Athem was speaking during a meeting held at the GUVS union's headquarters. Athem expressed satisfaction with the level of services provided by the Union, through the various voluntary societies all over Jordan.

The minister stressed the need for promoting the union's services and for orienting citizens on the federations activities, through the mass media and public gatherings.

GUVS President Abdullah Al Khatib reviewed the union's achievements and the scope of its work, noting that the union has become a social institution. He said the union has contributed more than JD 2 million to support social work, and has last year focused on development projects, including 10 centres for the handicapped.

Khatib said the union has contributed JD 800,000 towards agricultural and health projects and JD 500,000 in aid to charitable societies.



Prime Minister Mudar Badran (left) Thursday receives President of the Professional Associations Council Tayseer Himsi and an accompanying delegation (Petra photo)

Badran: Jordan doing its utmost to save Iraq from aggression

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Mudar Badran Thursday said that Jordan was making untiring efforts to help save Iraq from aggression and evil plans.

The prime minister was talking during a meeting with the president and members of the Professional Associations Council, who called at his office to deliver a memorandum, defining their contribution to face the current circumstances facing the country and the whole region.

Mr. Badran lauded the sense of responsibility that all citizens have demonstrated during the current circumstances, and praised the national and pan-Arab role the media is playing. The delegation, headed by President of the Jordan Pharmaceutical Association and President of the Professional Associations Council, Dr. Tayseer Himsi stressed the need for unifying efforts of all sectors

and organisations, as well as all emergency committees to ensure uniformity of activities. The delegation also called for forming a higher council for national mobilisation including members from all such organisations and committees. They called for a country-wide mobilisation and immediate preparations for training more people.

The delegation stressed the need for rearranging the general budget priorities and to ensure a more austere budget to cope with the new situation. The delegation called on the government to enhance channels of communications with official and national parties in the Arab, Islamic worlds to canvass support for Iraq.

Badran thanked the delegation members for their constructive ideas and informed them that the government viewed the efforts of the council and the

various unions and associations as complimentary to the national effort at this delicate stage.

Badran also said that the government was keen on keeping the wheel of production running and on safeguarding the country's achievements. He briefed the delegation on steps the government had taken to cope with the current crisis, saying that it was training more recruits for the People's Army in accordance with a special plan that takes into consideration the priorities already set.

He added that a national fund was also created to bolster the national efforts. Later the delegation visited Lower House of Parliament Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat and discussed with him issues pertaining to unifying official and national efforts to face the challenges posed by the war in the Gulf.

6,620 evacuees remain in Jordan Sudanese denied transit by Egypt, Syria

By P. V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Two thousand Sudanese national stranded in Jordan after fleeing the Gulf war zone are expected to be directly ferried home after Egypt as well as Syria denied them transit through their territory, officials and sources said Thursday.

About 550 Sudanese remained at the port of Aqaba Thursday following the Egyptian refusal to grant them transit visa for an overland trip to Sudan, and efforts to fly them home through Syria failed after Damascus also turned down a request for their transit through Syrian territory, official sources said.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is arranging to transport other Sudanese, now in other transit camps in Jordan, to Aqaba so that all of them could sail to Port Said aboard a passenger vessel Saturday or Sunday, said Peter Schatzer, chief of mission at IOM in Amman.

While the Egyptian denial of transit visas to the Sudanese was seen as part of the political fallout of the Gulf crisis — where Cairo is a staunch member of the anti-Iraq coalition and Khartoum is seen as sympathetic to Baghdad — there was no immediate explanation for the Syrian denial of transit to the Sudanese. Mr. Schatzer indicated that IOM dropped efforts to pursue transit visas for the Sudanese when it appeared that a passenger ship

would be made available for the evacuees to be ferried to Port Said. It could not be immediately established whether Syria would have maintained its refusal in the face of diplomatic efforts at a higher level.

Mr. Schatzer also said that other Asian evacuees would also be ferried to Egypt from which flights home from Cairo would be arranged. Others might be sent to Damascus depending on final arrangements for their flights, he said.

Meanwhile, another source said Libya had offered to take in Somali nationals stranded in Jordan since August seeking political asylum through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in view of the civil war in their country.

Egypt has indicated its willingness to allow the transit of the Somalis through its territory to Libya, the source said.

A total of 456 Somali nationals remain in Jordan but it was not immediately known whether all of them would opt to accept the Libyan offer. UNHCR officials could not be reached for comment Thursday. But it was learnt later that at least 10 Somali nationals were aboard a ship that left Aqaba Thursday evening, in what some officials described as a first-hand test to see whether Egypt would live up to its pledge to accept Somali nationals for transit.

One of the main problems facing the Somalis had been the refusal by airlines to recognise their passports after their

government declared the documents null and void and ordered all Somalis to obtain new passports from Somali missions abroad. At least two airlines which accepted some of the Somalis aboard had to pay heavy fines, the source said.

There is no Somali mission in Jordan and the nearest one is in Damascus, but Syria is denying the Somalis entry to its territory.

According to IOM figures, 6,620 evacuees remained in Jordan Thursday. They included 456 Indians, 76 Bangladeshis, 11 Filipinos, 30 Pakistanis, 546 Somalis, 963 Vietnamese, 250 Tunisians, 402 Yemenis, 87 Moroccans, seven Afghans, 10 Djiboutians, three Mauritians, 11 Iranians, two Ugandans and 1,697 other nationalities (some from the Latin America). The rest were Egyptians and Sudanese.

These figures differ slightly from those available with the National Evacuee Welfare Committee and IOM officials explained that the committee's list includes only those who are housed at the various transit camps in the country.

Others include those who have been brought to Jordan by their employees or those who made their own way to the kingdom without going to the transit camps.

In the absence of regular airline flights to and from Amman, IOM, which is funded by international contributions, is left with the option of using Egypt or Syria for the passage home for the evacuees.

Security forces arrest fundamentalist

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Muslim fundamentalist leader was detained by security forces Thursday after he called on Muslims and Arabs everywhere to attack the interests of the United States and its allies in the coalition now waging war against Iraq.

The arrest of Atta Abu Rashta, leader of the Al Tahrir (Islamic Liberation Party), was seen as a strong signal from the government to "bitterly" underground fundamentalist "groupings which have surfaced in the wake of the democratic process under way in the Kingdom."

"We are willing to allow all political activities within the confines of the democratic system in the country," said a senior security source. "But making inflammatory and threatening comments is going beyond the limits of democracy and freedom of speech, and we will not tolerate it," added the source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Abu Rashta, an engineer by profession, held a rambling press conference during which he called for attacks on the interest of all partners in the American-led anti-Iraq coalition "everywhere in the Arab and Islamic World."

He also asserted that the "rulers of the Arab and Muslim countries which do not support Iraq in its confrontation with the new Crusaders will be toppled." According to Mr. Abu Rashta, the leaders of Egypt, Syria, Morocco and Pakistan — all Muslim countries and members of the anti-Iraq front — are "traitors to the cause and will be ousted from their positions of power in the jihad (holy war) waged by the Arabs and Muslims."

The Al Tahrir was bolder in its second press conference after the Aug. 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and it was seen by many observers as an effort to secure

political support as a grouping.

The group was established in the occupied Gaza Strip in 1952 with the avowed aim of "creating an Islamic state where Islam reigns supreme," but in the wake of the success of the nationalist-oriented Palestinian uprising it has slightly shifted to a more central path of liberating the occupied territories.

The group is suspected of carrying out several attacks across the demarcation line with Israel.

It was not immediately known whether Mr. Abu Rashta would be released after questioning.

The arrest of the Tahrir leader was the first of a "political activist" since November 1989 when Jordan held its first elections and threw open the door for a democratic process, which has taken roots since then with the elected Lower House of Parliament enjoying legislative clout of a level unprecedented in any Arab country.

"No doubt the arrest is a signal to all fundamentalist groups that they should not abuse the freedom that has been given to them," commented a political observer.

"Some of the groups are already treading the border line, and it comes as no surprise that the government has moved against Al Tahrir to set an example for the others," commented the observer, preferring anonymity.

Al Tahrir, whose membership is believed to be limited to a few hundred people concentrated in the Al Hitin refugee camp and Russefeh area in the northwestern suburbs of Amman, is vying with the Islamic Jihad — Beit Al Maqdes, another fundamentalist group, for political foothold.

Several Tahrir members are serving jail sentences for security and law and order crimes related to last May's violent clashes following the killing of at least seven Palestinians by an Israeli gunman in Tel Aviv.

'U.S. aims to destroy Iraq's power'

AMMAN (Petra) — Secretary General of the Arab Lawyers Union Farouq 'Abdu Issa Thursday said the American-led attack against Iraq was not targeted at liberating Kuwait, but rather at destroying the Iraqi military machinery, which Iraq was saving to fight Israel with.

In an interview with Radio Jordan, Abu Issa said that the progress of military operations in the Gulf has proved that Iraq has a great, able and giant power, capable of repulsing aggression.

He said that the ALU has, since the onset of war against Iraq, issued a statement rejecting the war, which the U.S. started under the pretext of implementing U.N. Security Council resolution 678, to achieve its old-new evil designs of destroying the Iraqi power.

He noted that the U.N. Security Council resolution has set Jan. 15 as the deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and for using other means, but did not specify war as the only means.

Foreign newspapers arrive

By Nur Sati
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Avid readers of foreign newspapers and magazines panicked the first week of the Gulf war, which erupted on Jan. 17, when they thought that foreign material would not be entering the country because of the cancellation of air flights.

"At the beginning there were problems," according to Raja Issa director of the Jordan Distribution Agency. "Because U.S. had declared the war sooner there were some delays in distributing magazines and newspapers," he added.

Despite rumours that soon there will be no foreign reading materials, Issa said that all the talk about no flights is "not true." "The talk comes from the enemies of Royal Jordanian," Issa asserted.

According to Royal Jordanian (RJ) officials, RJ is flying to Vienna and from there all over the world. "So there are no problems in getting the foreign reading material into the country now," Issa told the Jordan Times.

As of this week, regular distribution will resume since flights are running more or less on schedule. "All newspapers that have arrived today will be distributed immediately throughout the country," Issa said.

Karaki calls for youth committees

SALT (Petra) — Minister of Youth and Culture Khalid Al Karaki Thursday stressed the important role the youth can play in the current circumstances, and called for the formation of youth committees.

Karaki said such committees could perform such activities as first aid, immunisation, and organised blood donations. During a tour in a number of clubs and youth centres in Balqa Governorate, Karaki said the Ministry and the youth will put all their available resources at the disposal of the provincial governments, who will be maintaining close cooperation and coordination with the civil defence and People's Army.

At a meeting held in the youth welfare department and attended by heads of clubs and youth centres, Karaki called for directing special attention to the youth and developing their skills and capacities, through the introduction of incentives and awards of appreciation at the



Khalid Al Karaki

state level. Karaki recalled the importance of the recommendations adopted at a conference on youth in September and underlined the need for close coordination and interaction between the clubs and youth centres. The minister also called for providing the necessary financial support for such clubs and centres and for providing them with emergency equipment.

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Problem is theirs

NOT MANY Jordanians had thought that war was inevitable in the Gulf. The majority believed that there was too much at stake for it to happen. Now that it has erupted, however, there is a growing perception on our part that it will probably take months before its outcome can be judged or determined.

His Majesty King Hussein did everything in his power to prevent the stalemate from developing into war. Jordanians were interested not only in avoiding the confrontation's economic, political and ecological consequences for the whole region. We also guarded against the very uncertain future (for everybody concerned) that a conflagration of this magnitude would result in.

The position that the King and the government have taken is one of official neutrality, where Jordan would not be allowed to serve as a battleground for the combatants. The people, Jordanians and Palestinians alike, on the other hand, know where their hearts and sympathies are: with Iraq all the way. For obvious reasons, this is a solid position that Jordan would continue to take even under the most extreme circumstances.

The view which is widely and strongly held here is that Iraq can put up a good fight, probably for a period extending to a year, if not more. And even though the King has issued a qualified call for a ceasefire, deep down the Jordanians feel that the chances of halting hostilities are indeed remote at the present. We are thus bracing for an extended period of fighting and for even getting involved should the Israelis be adventurous enough and decide to use Jordanian territory or airspace in any retaliatory attacks against Iraq.

Our armed forces are capable and confident, ready and willing to defend the Kingdom, its territory and sovereignty. All of our people stand solidly behind them. The U.S.-led alliance has so far managed to convince the Israelis into not retaliating against Iraqi missile attacks. But we still believe that even the dispatch to Israel of American Patriot batteries and U.S. soldiers to operate them is not high enough a bribe for Israel to stay out of the conflict for ever, especially if the war escalates into the use of mass destruction weapons.

So, even though some Jordanians tend to think that Israeli involvement in the war is not inevitable (since it would not only be detrimental to America's coalition with the Arabs but is also capable of adding only very little to the allies' war effort, in terms of planes and bombs and extra firepower), we should be prepared to face the worst-case scenario.

In any case, other than to satisfy their own insatiable egos, we believe that the Israelis do not have to move an inch to defend themselves, the Americans (and the British) are doing the dirty work for them. This opinion has to be shared by all those who actually feel that for the U.S. to be fighting Iraq is not so much because of oil as it is in the defence of Israel.

This feeling was reflected last week in a non-binding resolution by the Lower House of Parliament in which the deputies called on all Arabs and Muslims to strike at American interests in the region.

Asked by a journalist at a press conference last Saturday what the resolution meant for Jordan, King Hussein simply said: "I believe parliament has the right to express people's anger and frustration and despair over what has been happening in the Arab World." The journalists attending the conference might have also noted that other parliaments "from the civilised world" had in fact gone beyond anything the Jordanian parliament ever did. They authorised their governments to wage war against Arabs and Muslims in Iraq. This war is a terrible crime against humanity.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i Arabic daily Thursday called on the U.S. administration to end its aggression on Iraq which, it said, is a capital crime and a desperate adventure. The time has come for the U.S. administration to enter a dialogue with Iraq to reach a settlement to the crisis, and for settling the Palestine question, now that Washington has realised the depth of frustration over its failure to achieve anything from the ongoing aggression on Iraq, said the paper. The Americans have entered a quagmire from which there is one way for escape and that is through a halt to the air raids and the start of negotiations instead of confrontations which are bound to be costly in human and material costs, according to the paper. There is one way for Israel to escape the Iraqi missile attacks, and that is through withdrawing all Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories in implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, the paper continued. It said that Iraqi missile attacks on Israel are designed to force the Israelis to succumb to the will of the international community which insists on an international conference to find a settlement for the Palestine problem. Israel can no longer ignore the need for such a conference, neither can the U.S. administration deny its failure to achieve its objectives through continued air raids on Iraqi cities, the paper added. It said that the time is ripe for negotiations and peace, rather than the perpetuation of wars.

Farmers in the Jordan Valley region have proved their steadfastness by clinging on to their lands and pursuing their work with diligence, undaunted by the war in the Gulf, and in defiance of reported Israeli massing of troops along the confrontation lines with Jordan, says a columnist in Al Ra'i daily Thursday. Nazih says that the farmers in the Jordan Valley continue to produce food for Jordanians and to sell products abroad to earn the country badly needed hard currency under very difficult circumstances, thus proving that they form the backbone of the Jordanian economy. We have no doubt that other sectors are following the same course, and shouldering their responsibility under the present circumstances; but the farmers have been facing a two-fold challenge represented in the scarcity of water for irrigating and the weather conditions on the one hand and the general threatening mood due to the massing of Israeli troops.

Between nations and miscalculations

By Izzat Dajani

"The corrupting influence of the United States and its lackey Arab governments." This may appear as part of a statement in one of today's papers. However, it is an extract from an article by Zonis and Brumberg's in the International Herald Tribune on Oct. 18, 1984, on anti-Americanism in the Middle East.

The United States in particular, and its coalition partners whether Western or Arab in general, have all committed grave errors in judging events in the Arabian Gulf, as followed by their subsequent reaction. I say coalition rather than alliance as the former represents such combination of partners, but stresses on the temporary nature of this grouping due to differences that range from strategic, political or cultural convictions and practices.

Following Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, the United States adopted a Zero Sum strategy which is one of pursuit and evasion and requires skill as opposed to coordination. America's skill concentrated on isolating Iraq and consolidating a coalition against it. The U.S. encountered all serious and credible efforts by various parties to mediate a peaceful outcome to the conflict. It forced the adoption of most, if not all, resolutions by the U.N. Security Council. Its strategy was one of pure conflict which precluded any meeting of the minds. It opposed any coordination that involved trying to understand the other's point of view, searching for shared clues. By voicing and using threats, it reduced choices and alternatives. The United States ignored one of

the basic rules of conflict resolution as defined by Thomas Schelling: "To obtain a concession by one party obliges the other to rationalise the concession away from his own favour or the first party won't make the concession. This seems to be classic of U.S. attitude and behaviour in the Gulf crisis."

According to Harvard Professor Joseph Nye, America is less powerful in 1990 than it was in 1950, but its position as the world's superpower remains unchallenged. Its prime military adversary for 40 years is suffering acute economic decline. The Soviet Union and China lag both economically and in their political systems; Europe lacks political unity; Japan is deficient both in military power and in global ideological appeal.

The United States is leading the world in what is termed as the new world order. In actual fact what this means is the elimination of the classical multipolarity and the birth of a unipolar world in which the U.S. stands to lead and dominate. It is recognised that America commands the full range of power resources - military, economic, political, scientific and cultural. It is a dramatic formula defining short term superiority but with enduring longer term repercussions. After all, this is a changing world, with changing priorities and shifting alliances, or rather, coalitions. Desert Storm is the first test of this new order. It is ironic that the Gulf war should be named Desert Storm - a storm usually brings rain and wind, snow and thunder, benefits and disasters. This Desert Storm is bringing future changes to the region by exposing

ing archaic institutions, feudal regimes, and unjust distribution of wealth between mosaic countries and artificially drawn borders. Its thunder will reveal and blow the coalition, expose the transitory of the new world order, and eventually challenge this unipolar, U.S.-led world!

In the Gulf crisis, discussions between Iraq and the United States were impeded because the two sides were pursuing different paths of logic. Iraq insisted on linkage between the Gulf and all other Middle Eastern problems, primarily the Arab-Israeli conflict and the establishment of the state of Palestine. On the other hand, the United States, a hostage nation to Jewish influence and interests, insisted that there should never be linkage. The U.S. recognised that it was in no definite position to exert enough pressure on Israel to abide by various U.N. resolutions calling for the latter to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories. The U.S. thus adopted what is known as positional bargaining. This puts relationship and substance in conflict whereby the relationship tends to become entangled with the problem. The U.S. should have focused on interests, not positions as the former define the problem, and reconciling them leads to a wise and elegant solution. It is ironic and appalling how the U.S. and to an extended degree the coalition failed to recognise this. America bargained over positions and ultimately endangered and eliminated any chance of an ongoing relationship. This is best exemplified in the Geneva-held Iraq-U.S. talks.

and the positional bargaining the U.S. followed and insisted upon. Some would argue that Iraq also performed in a similar positional manner. One must not forget however the many symbols and indications Iraq made to reconcile points of interests. It allowed all Western national troops in Iraq and Kuwait to leave. Its Aug. 12 initiative to solve all disputes in the region was worthy of serious consideration. It kept all channels of negotiations open with all parties. Iraq signalled compromise but within the framework of an overall resolution. America kept a blind eye to all this. It drastically failed to recognise that Iraq's power remains to be structural, personal, and above all issue-based.

It seems doubly ironic that the Arab members of the coalition are mainly those countries that constantly try to lay claim to Arab leadership. The agenda of Egypt and Syria is to increase the flow of petrodollars into their dying economies. They need a subjugated Iraq for various reasons, the one that stands to hold most being the unique location of Iraq at the crossroads between the Arabian Gulf, Greater Syria, and North Africa. This geographic uniqueness combined by Iraq's tremendous resources, credible leadership, technological transfer and advancement, and a great feel for Arab nationalism make Iraq the most prospective leader in the Arab World. However, Iraq's policies of nationalism, Arabism and to a certain degree secularism did not suit those others striving for leadership. Iraq's credibility is en-

hanced by its long-standing conviction to liberate Palestine as it posed serious threat and challenge to the Jewish state. Iraq was building, fortifying and advancing while the other dream-leaders were just talking against imperialism and retarding in capabilities while subjugating their will to the very imperialists they denounced. The Saudis and the other Gulf states stand to lose most. Saudi Arabia's decision to accept American and Western forces on its territory announces the end of feudal rule in the Arabian Peninsula.

Its custodianship of the Muslim holy places will no doubt come under serious questioning! These coalition Arabs feel they can get close to events in the U.S. by supporting the latter in its Desert Storm. They think their action can form a degree of influence over the U.S. administration in direct competition with Israel. To them we say it is nice to dream, but it is dangerous to live in a mirage that casts illusion over events and possibilities. To them we say just listen to what Lawrence Eagleberger, President Bush's special envoy had to say in Israel in the aftermath of Iraq's missile attacks: "Make no mistake, on the fundamentals the interests of the U.S. and Israel will always be equal." To them we say that the only true friend of the Arabs remain to be the Arabs.

The only path to force change in the U.S. is Arab solidarity and unity, and certainly not shallow coalitions with the West. It is one thing being reasonable, practical and dignified in dealing with the world at large, no matter how hum-

ble your resources are totally unacceptable to see rich and able countries dealing with West as "slaves and m without having to clarify who and which is which

The U.S. is so involved in the Gulf war that any short of the destruction of Iraq's military and economic ability, the change of its regime and the total annihilation of Kuwait as a country, the U.S. cannot claim victory. However, for Iraq is a core different issue. Every day stands firm is a victory. moment Iraq holds firm is a victory. Any change in political or otherwise tries of the "coalition Arab" a victory as much as initiated by Iraq's drive for nationalism and Arabism redistribution of the Arab World is a victory. The restoration of Palestinian rights at establishment of the Palestinian state is a victory. The rebuilding of Iraq after the war ends, financed by Arab funds, and will be man Arab human resource abundance. This tremendous victory by Iraq is stronger, even more so Iraq will emerge with its mature and credible ership. Iraq does not lose much as its vict defined every day in stance and steadfastness biggest losers are those made the gravest missions and remain to be mosaic coalition Arab and their Western mas

Saddam

(Continued from page 1)

said one of the planes ditched an Exocet.

A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) correspondent, reporting from the British frigate London, said two Iraqi French-built Mirage F-1s were blown out of the sky before they got within range to fire Exocet sea-skimming missiles.

Argentina fired the French missiles with devastating effect against British forces during the 1982 Falklands war. Iraq used them during its 1980-88 war with Iran and sent an Exocet crashing into a U.S. frigate by mistake in the Gulf in 1987, killing 37 sailors.

The United States said it had lost its 15th plane since the war began last Thursday. An F-16 fighter was crippled by Iraqi ground fire over Kuwait but the pilot baled out and was plucked from the Gulf by a helicopter.

British Defence Minister Tom King said the Royal Air Force had lost its fifth Tornado bomber in combat. Britain was reinforcing its aircraft in the Gulf with six to eight 1960s-vintage Buccaneer fighter-bombers.

He also said two more infantry battalions - 1,200 men - were being sent to Saudi Arabia.

Waves of allied planes pounded Iraq on the eighth day of the war as skies cleared over the southern war zone.

French Jaguar fighter-bombers, striking into southern Iraq for the first time, joined the attack on the Republican Guard.

The United States said allied aircraft made 3,000 sorties in the last 24 hours, the highest for a single day since the start of the war. Of more than 15,000 sorties carried out since Jan. 17, some 8,000 were combat missions.

President George Bush and Defence Secretary Dick Cheney expressed concern in a meeting with senior Republicans in Congress that Americans are expecting a quick end to the week-old conflict, spokesman Martin Fitzwater said.

In a war producing scenes often shown live on television, the U.S. government is finding itself constantly cautioning against euphoria and emphasising that battle wins and losses should be expected as part of the ebb and flow of war.

In recent days officials have stressed it will take some time to end the war and ridiculed some pre-war estimates that victory was possible in a matter of days.

"I don't think anybody in the administration has ever given a time other than we've said probably months," Mr. Fitzwater replied when asked how long the war might last. "But I've never heard anything more specific than that."

He told reporters Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney were concerned about the general public mood.

"And their concern of course is that people should not expect this to be over a matter of days,

that we need to get into kind of an even keel in terms of our public psyche that allows us to accept the fact that this is going to last for some period of time," Mr. Fitzwater said.

He said people should realise that "there are going to be ups and downs, there are going to be enemy victories, there are going to be enemy surprises, there are going to be days when we see allied losses."

Senior officials have expressed bafflement at tactics displayed so far by Iraq against sending its forces into direct engagement with allied forces.

Military analysts say they presume Iraq is saving up his firepower hoping to land stinging blows later with high casualties and take the fire out of America's belly.

Allied forces, aided by clearings skies, intensified air and naval bombardment of southern Iraq on Thursday, rocking cities in Iran, the national Iranian news agency IRNA said.

IRNA, reporting from the border city of Khorramshahr, said waves of allied aircraft raided southern Iraq, including the port of Basra which has come under repeated heavy bombing this week.

During one raid at 12:40 a.m. (0910 GMT) U.S. warships lobbed four missiles at Basra, the agency said.

IRNA says it has monitoring centres all along the Iran-Iraq border.

Iraq said only 90 of its troops had been killed in the fighting up until Tuesday. Previously it said 39 troops had been killed by hostile fire.

"Despite all the concentrated enemy bombing, our armed forces' losses... were only 90 martyrs from the air strikes against the enemy made over 10,000 sorties," the Iraqi News Agency said.

Both the agency and Baghdad Radio said President Saddam travelled to the southern front to meet with his commanders and members of the general staff. He told the officers Iraq's superior will power and patience will pave the way to victory.

"The American aggressors and their allies deluded themselves into believing they could carry out an overwhelming attack against Iraq, but they are disappointed," Baghdad Radio quoted him as saying.

"They will never defeat us, nor will they escape the punishment they deserve. They used all their means to achieve their purpose, including cruise missiles and a great number of airplanes. The forces of arrogance and evil even bombed us with lies and propaganda to cover their miscalculations and black wishful thinking," he said.

"The material losses suffered by Iraq can only be compensated by a victory... it is only a matter of time before the enemy becomes convinced it has done all it can and that the Iraqis are determined to confront it and triumph over it," he added.

Baghdad Radio also said that allied warplanes attacked two Iraqi oil tankers in the Gulf Tuesday, spilling large quantities of oil into the sea.

U.S. military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Greg Pepin told a briefing Iraq had fired six Scud missiles on Wednesday night, one at Israel and five at Saudi Arabia. All were shot down, he said.

He said Iraq had fired a total of 22 Scuds at Saudi Arabia, 18 of which had been destroyed. The rest had fallen harmlessly into the sea or desert, he said.

Col. Pepin said U.S. military strength in the Gulf now stood at 475,000 - army 260,000, navy 75,000, marines 90,000 and air force 50,000.

Other allied forces ranged against Iraq in the Gulf numbered 200,000.

Col. Pepin said aircraft from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Canada, Britain, Italy and France had joined U.S. planes in missions over the past 24 hours.

The Iraqi air force still has some 600 combat aircraft and 200 attack helicopters despite the massive bombardment of Iraqi airfields since the beginning of the war, Italy's defence minister said Thursday.

Giving the figures, Defence Minister Virginio Rognoni told a parliamentary committee Iraq's ability to use its air force was very limited because the U.S.-led coalition fighting Iraq had destroyed the country's military airfields.

"Baghdad still has some 600 aircraft and 200 attack helicopters," he said, adding these were sheltered in protective bunkers. He gave no further details.

A report that South African Muslims might help Iraq to fight U.S.-led forces in the Gulf has cost 100 pilgrims their places on an airlift out of Saudi Arabia, a travel agent said Thursday.

Cape Town travel agent Usman Ahmad said the group stranded in Jeddah after a religious pilgrimage was dropped from the passenger list for a special flight out of the region.

"They were supposed to leave today, but the Saudi and Egyptian officials were so angry about the plan to send South Africans to fight in Iraq that they lost their places," he said.

Mr. Ahmad said 310 South African pilgrims were stranded in Mecca and Jeddah following the cancellation of some charter flights out of the region.

The South African government, which fully backs President George Bush's Gulf strategy, is helping to arrange flights out of Saudi Arabia via Egypt and Britain.

South African Muslim leader Maulana Nazeer Azz Desai, who is coordinating plans to send 10,000 men and boys to support Iraq's forces, said he was going ahead with his project.

"If there are Muslim men

stranded in Mecca they should be trying to get to Iraq to fight the Americans and not trying to come home. That is their duty," he said.

Israel

(Continued from page 1)

being provided to whoever needed them. He also reported a decrease in violent incidents since the curfew began.

"We have not changed in any way our policy or tactics in the territories. We have made it sure that they understood that we will not allow violence to undermine our security," said the spokesman, Major Moshe Fogel.

The Israelis have also been under a curfew, and more, they have been subjected to missile attacks," he added.

Israel has come under four missile attacks from Iraq since Friday, injuring over 100 people and damaging dozens of apartment buildings. For several days, citizens throughout Israel - apart from workers in certain sectors of economy - were ordered to stay indoors as a measure of precaution against Iraqi attacks.

China

(Continued from page 1)

of the U.S.-led alliance, rejecting domestic criticism of Egypt's role in the multinational force, said no one would take a ceasefire call seriously unless Iraq were ready to withdraw.

Some past Middle East wars have been halted by Security Council resolutions but diplomats noted that in this case the multinational alliance had a United Nations mandate to use force against Iraq.

"The United Nations is not neutral in this conflict. It is effectively a party to the dispute," another diplomat said. Yemen and Tunisia have both said the bombing of Iraq went beyond the U.N. aim of Baghdad's withdrawal from Kuwait.

Among Iraq's neighbours, Jordan has appealed for a truce to allow more time for diplomacy and neutral Iran has called for an emergency meeting of the 46-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference on the war.

Iran has sent U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar proposals for a regional security system in a U.N. framework without foreign troops in the Middle East.

Both the United States and Britain have veto powers as permanent members of the Security Council. Iraq has spurned peace approaches by the Soviet Union, another permanent member.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar, asked about the peace initiatives, said on Tuesday that Iraq must make the first move. "We have to think first of a withdrawal if we are consistent with the United Nations Security Council resolutions," he said.

Pakistani Prime Minister

Nawaz Sharif arrived in Syria Thursday on the third leg of his five-nation tour to seek an end to the Gulf war.

Pakistan has some 11,000 troops in Saudi Arabia as part of the alliance against Iraq but Mr. Sharif has come under intense domestic pressure to pull his troops out.

He will hold talks with Prime Minister Makhmoud Zabi and President Hafez Al Assad during his two-day visit, officials said. Syria has also sent thousands of troops to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Sharif, who started his tour in Iran Tuesday, arrived in Damascus on Thursday.

"Turkey and Pakistan share the view that efforts to end the war, which will benefit no country of the region including Iraq, are needed," said a joint communique issued in Ankara after his talks with Turkish leaders.

Japan

(Continued from page 1)

the community of nations, but is capable and willing to act accordingly," he said in a statement.

A Japan Airlines plane would be sent to Cairo by Saturday to begin ferrying home some of the 1,000 Vietnamese refugees stranded in the region, Japanese government spokesman Misoji Sakamoto said Thursday.

Tokyo would consider using military planes to fly home the remaining refugees if private airlines refused to take part in a relief programme, he said.

However, Japan Airlines said it had not yet decided whether to send the plane.

Japan and Germany are the only members of the group of seven industrialised democracies without a military presence in the Gulf. France, Britain, Italy, and Canada have sent units to support U.S.-led forces.

Turkey

(Continued from page 1)

incoming Iraqi missile, blew up in the air near Diyarbakir Thursday, Dutch and Turkish military spokesmen said. There was no damage or casualties.

The sources close to Mr. Ozal said he believed Turkey would emerge from the Gulf crisis with great gains in the West after staunchly backing the U.S.-led alliance against Iraq.

Turkish opposition parties say Mr. Ozal, who dominates decision-making through his influence over the ruling Motherland Party he founded, is dragging Turkey needlessly towards war.

Newspaper commentators said Baghdad's warning had come as no surprise. "Iraq has the right to send this kind of message if Incirlik and Batman (another Turkish base) are being used against it," said Ugur Mumcu of the left-leaning Cumhuriyet daily.

"Turkey is being directed by the Bush administration. War could break out any time, no-

body knows," he told I "I wouldn't be surprised if Iraqis attack us as we see doing all we can to them," said Yusuf Kani of the English-language Daily News.

"The question is will it such a risk?" he added. Turkey, with the biggest armed forces in the southeast, Ozal's week 180,000 Turkish were facing about eight divisions across the 330-kilometre frontier.

Rafsanjani

(Continued from page 1)

conflict," a Foreign spokesman said Thursday.

Mr. Shukla returned Thursday from Yugoslavia current chairman of the member NAM.

India is trying to co many members of the mo as possible to evol approach towards finding tion to the Gulf war, the man said.

"We wish to consult as cross-section of the non-membership and certain tives have already been he said.

The Foreign Ministry's week that India was pu peace formula calling for in hostilities in the Gulf timetable for Iraqi troo; draws from Kuwait.

Khamenei

(Continued from page 1)

through regional contact out the big powers an "endless aggressive natu "They are doing this w wrong in nature, with ruthlessness and cruelty," quoted him as saying.

"What is the guilt of the dents of the Iraqi cities... as the holy shrines, who lose their lives, properti factories, factories and air he asked. "No bigger cri be recalled."

Solidarit

(Continued from page 1)

the embassy in Bonn ar being expelled, said Mr. macher. Only the amba and three others will remi said.

Before his departur Israel, Mr. Genscher longest-serving foreign m in Europe, said there a room for diplomacy in th crisis.

He said an Arab peace tive by the Maghrebi statu hope of success now b Iraq "was not intereste ending the war."

On Wednesday, five African countries - A Morocco, Libya, Tunis Mauritania - formally quested an urgent meeting U.N. Security Council to c the Gulf war.

OPEC states earn \$160b in '90

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — Surging oil prices caused by the Gulf crisis helped propel OPEC revenues last year to their highest level in nearly a decade, analysts estimated.

The oil-producing nations last year earned from \$151.1 billion to \$165.8 billion — as much as 12 per cent higher than their 1989 gains, according to the estimates.

"The major reason (1990) is so high is because of the conflict in the Gulf," said Peter Bogin, associate director for oil markets at Cambridge Energy Research Associates in Paris.

He estimated members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raked in an extra 16 billion in the last half of the year because of the Gulf-caused spin to the crude prices and production.

Of the bonanza, oil giant Saudi Arabia captured about \$9.3 billion, according to Bogin's estimates. The kingdom, the world's biggest crude exporter, was pumping flat out to help make up for any losses stemming from the Gulf conflict.

Iraq missed out on export sales of about \$7.8 billion and Kuwait on some \$6.1 billion

because their oil was embargoed during the year-end surge, Bogin calculated.

In all, he estimated the value of oil exports of the 13 OPEC nations at \$151.1 billion last year.

Pierre Terzian, editor of the Paris-based newsletter Petrospectives, came up with a higher estimate of \$165.8 billion for last year's gains, including crude, natural gas liquids and related products.

Had prices held steady at 1989 levels, he figures the oil producers would have raked up revenues of just \$121.3 billion last year.

In 1989, OPEC reported the value of oil exports of its members at \$116.6 billion. 1990's tally won't be released until later in the year.

Under Bogin's count, last year's earnings were the highest since 1983 when the group recorded export sales of \$156.9 billion. With Terzian's scenario, they were the most since the 1982 gains of \$202.8 billion.

OPEC earnings hit a record \$281.5 billion in 1980.

With the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, prices took off on worries that an outbreak of war in the oil-rich Gulf region would

shut off crude supplies.

The average price of a basket of crudes monitored by OPEC hit a high of \$37.22 a barrel in October. For all of 1990, it was \$22.26 a barrel, compared with \$17.31 in the previous year.

Prices initially fell with last week's outbreak of hostilities. Light sweet crude plunged a record \$10.56 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Super-producer Saudi Arabia was the big money-winner last year.

Terzian estimated the kingdom doubled its oil revenues, rising from \$21 billion in 1989 to \$18 billion last year because of higher prices and production.

Bogin tagged Saudi earnings at \$10.8 billion last year.

Saudi officials have said the kingdom will use much of the windfall to help pick up the expensive tab of stationing American troops on its soil and cushioning the blow of the crisis on some other nations' economies.

Iraq, which complained shortly before invading Kuwait about low oil prices, pocketed \$10.3 billion last year, well off the \$11.5 billion of 1989, according

to Bogin.

Kuwait, the target of Iraq's wrath for pumping too much crude and weakening prices, earned \$5.6 billion in 1990, about half its year-earlier gains, he estimated.

For poorer OPEC members, such as Algeria, Nigeria and Ecuador, the extra money has been a windfall for their financially strapped economies.

With soaring prices and output in the last half of the year, Bogin estimated that Iran got an extra \$3.2 billion to give it \$17.7 billion for the year as a whole. Nigeria, \$3.3 billion for a total of \$11.1 billion and Venezuela, \$3.6 billion for a total \$15.5 billion.

The United Arab Emirates drew in an extra \$2.9 billion to earn a yearly sum of \$16.9 billion — Libya, \$2.6 billion for a total of \$10 billion and Algeria, \$2.3 billion for a total of \$8.7 billion.

Bogin also calculated that Indonesia picked up an extra \$2 billion in the last half of the year for an annual gain of \$7.5 billion — Ecuador, \$290 million for a total \$1.8 billion — Gabon, \$260 million for a total of \$2.1 billion and Qatar, \$137 million for a total of \$3 billion.

Long Gulf war seen pushing gold price to \$400 an ounce

LONDON (R) — Growing market concern that the Gulf war might turn into a lengthy conflict could drive gold bullion back up to \$400 an ounce, traders say.

They said the metal gained market support at around \$380 in Europe Tuesday on the back of firmer oil prices.

News of any setback for the U.S.-led allies in the war with Iraq would quickly push it up to \$390 or more, they added. But they tended to reject any spectacular leap.

Gold is often viewed as a safe haven for investment in times of world crisis but overall since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait it seems to have lost much of this traditional role.

Last Thursday, after the outbreak of war, the gold price plunged from a high of \$411 in Asia to about \$374 in New York. The biggest movement within 24 hours since a bullion price boom in 1979-1980 when it peaked near \$850.

On Aug. 1, eve of Iraq's invasion, gold closed in London at \$375.25, about \$5 below current prices.

"Political events no longer push people into gold — other assets are more attractive," said Hans Kaufmann, head of research at Bank Baer in Zurich.

"Only if the war persists for over six months, leads to oil shortages and thus fuels fears of inflation are we likely to see people fleeing to gold," he said.

But Rhona O'Connell, precious metals analyst with brokers Lehman Brothers International in London, said gold has outpaced returns on the major stock markets by between 10 and 28 per cent since the invasion of Kuwait.

"Gold has outperformed equities since August and will continue to do," she said.

Most major stock markets have lost 10 to 25 per cent of their value, measured by market indices, since Aug. 1.

Below current levels, gold has established support around \$370, based on general physical demand and investor interest at that level, particularly in Asia, said Andy Smith from brokers UBS-Phillips and Drew.

But it could dip below \$370 if there were "peace on any terms," accompanied by a restoration of confidence in the financial markets, he said.

Richard Kornman, analyst with Barclays de Zoete Wedd Research Ltd, said \$400 was a likely market target if the allied assault faltered badly.

Beyond the Gulf war, he said the crisis in the Soviet Baltic republics was bullish for gold as, in the long term, could be China's takeover of Hong Kong in 1997 — as the Chinese are traditional hoarders of gold.

Lehman Brothers predicts that gold should outperform the Dow Jones industrial average of 30 major U.S. shares by seven per cent and the London Finan-

cial Times-Stock Exchange index of 100 leading British shares by 11 per cent, compared with Monday's levels, by the end of 1991.

It said in a report this week that, regardless of the outcome in the Gulf or how long it took to be achieved, the gold price should rise in dollar terms by 15 per cent and test \$440 by the end of 1991.

Bank Baer's Kaufmann said though recession generally did not encourage investment in gold, it could make gold more attractive as interest rates fell and rival investments got less rewarding.

Dealers said gold demand in the jewellery market might be reduced in the short term by the absence of Arab buyers. A major support for gold over the past year has been strong demand for jewellery but this has started to decline in line with a slowdown in the major industrial economies.

East European infant stock markets face credibility hurdle

VIENNA (R) — Wall Streets they are not, but fledgling stock exchanges are blossoming in Eastern Europe.

A year after the Berlin Wall came down, small bourses are already operating in Hungary and Yugoslavia, and others are being slated for launch soon in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Western financial experts say it will be some time before the exchanges earn the trust of local people who are still discovering capitalism after 40 years of communist rule.

Foreign investors will also

want to see the bourses well established along Western lines before they start using them to pump capital into the reforming East European states.

"Cautious development, the necessary training of staff, and the understanding of such an organisation will not need months but years," said Ruediger Vom Rosen, executive vice-president of the Federation of German Stock Exchanges.

Paul Smee, head of the international affairs unit at London's International Stock Exchange agreed. "It is vital to appreciate that, although much progress

has been made, these countries are at a relatively early stage in their development of a capital market," he said.

Crucial to the success of the stock exchanges are massive privatisation programmes, already under way in Hungary and Poland and planned for the other countries of the region.

Privatisation — the transfer of state-owned industry into private hands — will mobilise private capital and create the need for a market place where shares can be bought and sold.

Hungary, which started reforming its economy under the

communists, has the most advanced bourse in the region.

The Budapest Stock Exchange reopened in June 1990. Average daily trading volume is running at 15 to 20 million forints (\$250,000 to \$330,000), almost exclusively in shares.

In fact, only two shares are fully listed in Budapest. Another four are registered for trading without meeting the full listing requirements, and still two others are to be registered this month, bringing the total to eight.

"The Budapest exchange is still in its infancy, plagued by bureaucracy, low trading volume, limited capitalisation and a lack of blue chips," said the Austrian bank, Girozentrale und Bank der Oesterreichischen Sparkassen A.G.

But it added there were encouraging signs on the horizon. It expected a series of new issues to bring the total of listed companies to 20-30 within a few months. It also said there might be scope for the listing of foreign stocks.

About 20 leading Hungarian companies valued at more than \$5 billion are due to be privatised.

Saudis may start oil shuttle for Third World tankers

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia may start shuttling crude oil out of the Gulf for transfer to tankers from India and some other Third World countries which are barred from entering the waterway because of the war, oil and shipping sources said.

Saudi Aramco seems to be willing to shuttle oil outside the Gulf for some selected Third World countries, a Western oil industry executive in the Gulf said Thursday.

There was no confirmation from Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, which had resisted requests from its best customers — including Japan and Taiwan — that it use tankers to take crude out of the Gulf for delivery in safer waters.

Iran and Qatar, two other Gulf oil producers, have already started such shuttle services, mainly for Japanese refiners.

Shipping sources said Thursday that the threat to merchant shipping in the Gulf was diminishing.

The U.S. navy said Tuesday that the danger from mines was diminishing.

But cargo and hull insurance rates remained very high as the Gulf is considered a war zone by underwriters in London. Tanker freight rates were also on the rise, oil industry sources said.

Shipping company executives in the Gulf said the dozens of Western warships patrolling the Gulf made any Iraqi air and naval attack on merchant shipping improbable. They noted that Iraqi missile strikes were aimed at targets inside Saudi Arabia.

The kingdom's main oil loading terminals in the Gulf, Ras Tannurah and Juaymah, remained open and exports continued eight days after the United States and its allies launched the war to drive Iraq from Kuwait with massive air attacks.

Employing tankers to shuttle oil for delivery outside the Gulf is easy for crude producers, but

the transport and transfer costs are passed on to buyers.

India and some other countries have barred their ships entering the Gulf because of the war. Japanese ships are not allowed to call at Saudi ports or oil terminals.

Japan's shipowners and seamen's union have barred ships with Japanese crews from sailing west of longitude 52 degrees east in the Gulf, an area that encompasses Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Iran's northern Gulf ports.

The state-owned oil company Saudi Aramco has refused requests from Tokyo and Taipei to carry crude for ship-to-ship transfer out of the Gulf, oil industry sources said.

But three Indian-owned tankers were waiting outside the Gulf off the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Thursday and might be getting oil from a shuttle tanker loading at Ras Tannurah in three days' time, a shipping company

official said.

"Saudi Aramco have approached some shipping service companies for ship-to-ship operations outside the Gulf, but nothing has been fixed yet," he said.

Shipping sources said they were unsure if the ship-to-ship crude transfer operations would take place off the UAE port of Khor Fakkan in the Gulf of Oman, or off the Oman coast.

Iran has started shuttling its crude from Kharg Island to Lavan Island halfway down the waterway. Qatar shuttled one cargo for a Japanese refiner earlier this month.

Oil industry sources said Qatar charged \$1.60 per barrel for shuttling crude outside the Gulf, while Iran asked for 80 cents per barrel for its shuttle to Lavan Island. But Japanese oil industry executives said they would offer 50 cents per barrel to Iran for the transfer of oil.

WORLD STOCK MARKETS	
<p>TOKYO — Stocks closed higher on a technical rebound after three days of losses, helped by a modest firming on Wall Street and the absence of new negative developments in the Gulf. Volume was high compared with recent levels. The Nikkei closed up 218.91 points at 23,289.03.</p> <p>SYDNEY — A rise on the Tokyo exchange in the afternoon lifted Australian shares to a firmer close. Trading remained dreary. The All Ordinaries closed up 4.8 at 1,268.5.</p> <p>HONG KONG — Share prices closed at the day's high in a second straight session of enthusiastic, overseas-led buying. The Hang Seng index ended up 50.10 points at 3,140.50.</p> <p>SINGAPORE — Share prices rebounded to close higher over a broad front after three days of declines. The Straits Times Industrial Index ended 9.05 points higher at 1,209.31.</p> <p>BOMBAY — Prices fell sharply, undermined by reports that the government may raise prices of oil products. The Bombay Stock Exchange index dropped 29.58 points to 971.80. The National Index fell 9.04 to 501.54.</p> <p>FRANKFURT — Prices reversed their four-day slide as solid corporate earnings data assisted a technical rebound. The Dax index closed up 16.40 at 1,375.16.</p> <p>ZURICH — Shares rose sharply and closed at their highs of the day in lively trading, on the belief that a lower oil price would help cut inflation and that Swiss interest rates had peaked. The SPI Index closed up 20.3 at 896.6.</p> <p>PARIS — The market ended a four-day losing streak as investors put the war out of their minds and focused on hopes of a cut in interest rates. The CAC-40 index rose 31.38 to 1,553.77.</p> <p>LONDON — Prices slipped from morning highs after leading U.K. brewer Bass delivered a gloomy trading statement. At 1600 GMT the FTSE 100 Index was up 13.1 at 2,093.8.</p>	

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES	
Thursday, January 24, 1991 Central Bank official rates	
U.S. dollar	665.0
Pound Sterling	1300.4
Deutschemark	448.2
Swiss franc	531.2
French franc	131.8
Japanese yen (for 100)	304.8
Dutch guilder	397.5
Swedish crown	119.7
Italian lira (for 100)	59.6
Belgian franc (for 10)	216.4

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES	
LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Thursday.	
One Sterling	1.9575/85
One U.S. dollar	1.1558/68
	1.4850/57
	1.6727/33
	1.2520/30
	30.40/65
	5.0475/25
	1116/1117
	131.75/85
	5.5580/30
	5.8100/50
	5.7180/30
One ounce of gold	376.00/376.50

U.S. dollar	1.9575/85
Canadian dollar	1.1558/68
Deutschemark	1.4850/57
Dutch guilders	1.6727/33
Swiss francs	1.2520/30
Belgian francs	30.40/65
French francs	5.0475/25
Italian lire	1116/1117
Japanese yen	131.75/85
Swedish crowns	5.5580/30
Norwegian crowns	5.8100/50
Danish crowns	5.7180/30
U.S. dollars	

Latin American governments ditch money-losing companies

CARACAS, Venezuela (R) — Latin American governments are selling off state companies with the frenzied haste of a balloonist throwing out ballast to avoid a crash.

Countries throughout the region, faced with bloated public deficits and a crushing burden of debt, are finding that by unloading state assets they may get at least temporary relief for their awesome economic problems.

"Governments are being driven to privatise by pressure from creditors and also by a need to show the public they can do something even when they cannot really do much at all," said an economist with an international agency based in the region.

By selling ailing public sector companies and luring foreign investors with debt-for-equity

swap programmes, hard-pressed administrations can reduce pressure on the public purse and cut their external debt at the same time.

Nations as diverse as Argentina and Panama have either initiated sell-offs of airlines, phone companies and state banks or are readying lists of firms to put on the auction block.

In Brazil, President Fernando Collor de Mello has unveiled an ambitious programme of divesting state companies with a declared aim of raising \$17 billion by 1992.

In Argentina, where efforts to privatise industry have gathered pace since President Carlos Menem took office in 1989, controlling stakes have been sold in telecom firm Entel and state airline Aerolineas Argentinas.

Under the two deals Argenti-

na stands to slash \$7 billion from its \$40 billion commercial debt through debt-for-equity swaps, although it first needs a waiver from creditors before it can sell the assets.

The Mexican government recently sold the country's largest copper mine, Mexicana de Cananea, to private investors after finding buyers for airlines Aeromexico and Mexicana.

The administration of Harvard-trained President Carlos Salinas de Gortari hopes to raise billions by returning to private ownership banks, nationalised in 1982 at the onset of a debt crisis still gripping most of the region.

Hand-in-hand with privatisation has gone a dramatic change in how Latin American leaders perceive the state's role in the economy, compared with the

1960s and 1970s when government enterprise was seen as a locomotive of growth.

The idea of the state-as-entrepreneur held sway throughout the region and was pushed to its extreme in Venezuela, where state coffers were awash with oil revenues in the 1970s.

Driving privatisation along has been a fiscal crisis brought on by years of losses by ineptly managed state industries. Governments in many cases simply lack the resources even to recapitalise enterprises before selling them.

In Argentina, "around 50 per cent of the public sector deficit in the 1980s was due to losses by state companies," a World Bank economist said.

Fearing a big shakeout of jobs, unions in Argentina have resisted the Entel privatisation.

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Lithuania asks Moscow to pull troops out of occupied buildings

VILNIUS, USSR (AP) — Lithuania asked the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from buildings seized in the separatist republic as the Russian legislature debated Thursday on a resolution condemning the crackdown in the Baltics.

The resolution, which has the backing of Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, condemns self-proclaimed National Salvation Committees in Lithuania and Latvia for appealing to the army in "a prepared attempt to replace the legally elected organs of state power."

The Russian legislature appointed a committee to draft a final version of the resolution. One draft circulated at the opening of the session Thursday declared that any similar Salvation Committee would be unconstitutional in Russia, by far the largest of the 15 Soviet republics.

Despite Lithuania's President Vytautas Landsbergis' appeal, delivered to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev Wednesday, Soviet tanks were seen moving overnight through Vilnius, and a

Lithuanian government spokesman said the situation there was still dangerous.

"Now we feel the threat constantly," said government spokesman Audrius Azubalis.

The additional military units have not been removed from Lithuania. They have only been replaced by other units. The occupied buildings have not been returned to us," he said.

Soviet troops seized the main publishing house and the main broadcast centre earlier in the month, and Soviet Interior Ministry soldiers occupied the central main paper and dye warehouse in the Lithuanian capital Wednesday.

Azubalis said the Lithuanian government would remove barricades that have been erected around parliament and other buildings, "when we no longer have a threat. But the tragic events in Riga and Vilnius can be repeated."

A Soviet attack on the Lithuanian Broadcast Centre on Jan. 13 left 14 people dead, and shooting by black berets killed six people

in the Latvian capital of Riga last week.

Gorbachev in a statement broadcast nationally Tuesday, said he had no advance knowledge of the attacks and advocated that disputes in the Baltics be settled peacefully.

The Lithuanians said in their telegram Wednesday that they wanted to believe Gorbachev and suggested that the Soviet president order the "immediate" withdrawal of all forces that have occupied buildings.

The Kremlin has been pressuring the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to renounce their independence drives, begun last March. All three states, independent between the two world wars, were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940.

Moscow wants the republics to repeal those laws it calls unconstitutional — those which contradict Soviet laws. The republics say the laws passed by their freely elected parliaments are valid.

Self-defence units have been

formed in all three Baltic republics to try to protect civilians and buildings.

Meanwhile, a political crisis appeared to be brewing in neighbouring Latvia over President Anatolijs Gorbunovs' proposal that the republic's parliament discuss holding a referendum on independence.

Gorbunovs had discussed the idea with Gorbachev in Moscow Tuesday, two days after the violent attack by Soviet troops in Riga.

"I am completely against it. It is not possible to have a referendum in an occupied state," said Steins Valdis, chairman of the parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

Gorbachev said Tuesday his main task was to achieve calm in the Baltics. But he also called on the republics to abide by the Soviet constitution.

The Soviet military already controls press house, the main printing plant in Vilnius. A unit of the black beret troops of the Soviet Interior Ministry last weekend seized a similar plant in Riga.

34 nations begin talks on East European emigration

VIENNA, Austria (AP) — Government ministers from 34 nations began meeting Thursday on the problems posed by millions of discontented East Europeans who may seek their fortune in the West.

Declining living standards, rising unemployment and the threat of social upheaval in coming years are likely to unleash mass emigration to the West, particularly from the Balkans and the Soviet Union, experts fear.

Nobody knows for certain how many people may emigrate, but estimates range from 1 million to as many as 30 million.

In 1989, as democratic changes swept Eastern Europe, 1.3 million people from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union formed the largest migration since World War II, according to a draft document to be submitted at the conference.

In opening comments, Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky noted that the problem of mass migration extended beyond Europe.

Millions of people everywhere were seeking new homes, and "with the Gulf war, this number will rise yet again at a fast rate," Vranitzky said. He suggested that, in Europe, established norms be re-examined.

"The right to asylum and the rights of political refugees must remain untouched," Vranitzky said. "But definitions should be reconsidered in the light of increased democracy in Eastern Europe."

Noting that most East Europeans today move West to improve their lot economically, he appealed for "massive and coordinated economic and financial cooperation to give people in their own countries hope again."

To avert problems that might come with anticipated mass migration westward, Foreign and Interior Ministry officials from the 24 members of the Council of Europe are meeting colleagues from Eastern Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia.

Plans to liberalise travel regulations in the Soviet Union this year have been of particular concern to neighbouring Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and they and officials in Western Europe fear a possible mass migration.

G.E. Schrombogens, a senior Council of Europe official, said any mass exodus of Soviets is difficult to predict. But, he added, "it is necessary to be prepared."

Discussing the goals of the conference with reporters Wednesday, Schrombogens said that two extremes could be excluded.

The West will not "put up a high wall and say: 'Stay where you are,'" he said. But free emigration is also unlikely.

He said the two-day conference seeks a common platform that is "coordinated and peaceful."

Since democratic governments have replaced oppressive Communist leaderships in Eastern Europe, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people travelling to the West.

Western countries nearest to Eastern Europe, such as Germany, Austria and Italy, note increasing numbers who remain in search of jobs, often finding illegal work as cheap labourers.

Gulf crisis shows difficulty in creating European union

BRUSSELS (AP) — The way that countries in the European Community handled the Gulf crisis dramatised the difficulties they face in forming a powerful political union, say officials and analysts.

Spanish Foreign Minister Francisco Fernandez Ordóñez said the Community's effort to work together was "subjected to an authentic trial by fire" in the weeks leading up to the outbreak of the war.

"I fear the result hasn't been that good, he told Spain's El País newspaper.

Jacques Delors, president of the Community's executive body, said: "To be brutally honest, public opinion sensed that Europe was rather ineffectual."

As war approached, France struck out on its own, offering a last-ditch peace proposal in the U.N. Security Council just hours after foreign ministers of the European Community nations promised to stand united.

British Prime Minister John Major learned of the plan only after returning to London from

Paris where he had met with French President François Mitterrand, officials said.

Peter Ludlow, director of the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels, described the French push as "a setback" for the Community.

"It was both inept and... inconsistent with the spirit if not the letter of what the foreign ministers agreed on," he said.

Even so, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Greece generally went along with the French bid as a last-minute effort to avoid war.

The United States and Britain did not support the offer, which promised Iraq a Mideast peace conference in return for withdrawal from Kuwait.

The EC is putting together ambitious plans for a powerful economic, monetary and political union of the dozen nations. It is proposed to give Community institutions authority over monetary affairs and foreign, security and perhaps defence policy.

Major learned of the plan only after returning to London from

ments to the Gulf. Only Britain and France have sent ground forces to the region.

"Political union and a common foreign and security policy in Europe would have to go beyond statements and extend to action," he told the House of Commons.

"Clearly, Europe is not ready for that."

Fernandez Ordóñez predicted the Gulf experience would have "damaging repercussions" on work on the political union, particularly during debate on whether a majority vote of nations should decide foreign policy issues.

France and Britain maintain independent, highly nationalistic foreign policies, sometimes at odds with each other and other Community nations.

Dominique Moïse, deputy director of the French Institute of International Relations in Paris, said that had there been an EC political union, there would have been no separate peace offers on the Gulf.

Ludlow agreed, "it shows how weak we should not be in the future."

Panama elections to test government's popularity

PANAMA CITY (R) — The Panamanian government tests its strength against opposition forces once led by strongman Manuel Noriega Sunday in the first election since the United States toppled Noriega in a December 1989 invasion.

The by-elections for nine members of parliament, 10 city commissioners and 160 local councilors will be the first measures of the popularity of the government of President Guillermo Endara since he was installed as a U.S. military base on the eve of the U.S. invasion.

They will also mark the first true democratic elections since the Panamanian military seized power in October 1968.

According to most international observers and the Roman Catholic Church in Panama, Endara was winning the May 1989 presidential elections when Noriega annulled the vote.

But the 1989 elections were viewed more as a vote against Noriega than as a show of support for Endara.

His government has been pla-

gued by infighting and lack of experience while unemployment soars and a crime wave sweeps the country.

Polls taken since the invasion have shown Endara's administration steadily losing popularity.

A recent police uprising, which Endara quelled with the help of U.S. troops, also raised questions about the strength of his government and its ability to last its full term until 1994.

Sunday's partial elections were called after the electoral tribunal said irregularities in several districts in the 1989 elections had made it impossible to determine who had won some of the contests.

About 190,000 Panamanians are registered to vote Sunday. But despite promises that the vote would be the freest in over 30 years, electoral officials said they expected a low turnout because of confusion in electoral procedures and general apathy towards the political parties.

Between 40 and 50 international observers will monitor the elections, they added.

South Korea must join U.N. this year, Roh says

SEOUL (AP) — President Roh Tae-woo said Thursday that South Korea must thrust the United Nations as a full member this year.

Roh issued the directive after hearing a briefing by Foreign Minister Lee Sang-ock on South Korea's diplomatic goals for this year.

"In order to lay a firmer foundation for stability and peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula, our country's entry into the United Nations must be accomplished this year," Roh said.

Roh instructed the ministry to step up efforts to persuade rival North Korea to join the world body with South Korea. If such

efforts fail, South Korea's separate U.N. membership would be inevitable, he said.

South Korea has sought simultaneous U.N. membership with North Korea but the Communist state adamantly opposes the idea, contending that this would perpetuate the division of the Korean peninsula.

South Korea rejected a North Korean plan last year to share a single U.N. seat on a yearly rotation basis.

Currently, both Koreas hold observer status at the United Nations. The two have been bitter rivals since the division of their peninsula in 1945. They fought the 1950-53 Korean War.

De Klerk proposes major reforms, rightists object

CAPE TOWN (R) — President F.W. de Klerk has asked South Africa's parliament to outlaw segregated housing and farmland in what political analysts believe is a first step towards the compulsory integration of private property.

The proposed amendment to existing property laws could overturn 40 years of enforced segregation in housing and the reservation of 83 per cent of all farmland for whites.

"From what I am hearing, President De Klerk has other surprises up his sleeve as well," said Liberal Democratic Party parliamentarian Denis Worrall.

De Klerk forced white-supremacist townships to open their facilities to blacks last year, but political analysts said the new proposal was the first move to prevent individuals from practising a form of racial segregation.

"The emphasis of the reforms so far has been to remove the obligation to discriminate. This bill could make it illegal to discriminate," one parliamentary official said.

The proposal is contained in a draft bill which would make it illegal to include any racial restriction in contracts for the sale or letting of property.

Right-wing Conservative Party spokesman Koos Van Der Merwe said in an interview: "De Klerk has violated all his sacred promises to his own white people."

"He has crossed the middle line to join the radicals. We will not act outside the law, but we

are going to pinch him. He is going to feel the anger of the white people," he said.

Van Der Merwe said right-wingers, who claim the support of more than half the country's five million whites, would launch a new campaign of opposition to integration next week.

"Mr. De Klerk can expect stronger opposition from us, beginning with some surprise action by farmers in Pretoria next Tuesday," he said.

Van Der Merwe also objected to a draft bill that could allow interracial adoption for the first time. Few white babies are available for adoption in South Africa and whites are currently forbidden to adopt black babies.

Worrall, a former ambassador to London, said bills being prepared for the 1991 parliamentary session opening on Feb. 1 were apparently designed to prevent right-wingers from circumventing the promised repeal of laws segregating housing and farmland.

"This is a precursor of some very significant change. It is clear that President De Klerk plans to seize the political and moral high ground when he opens parliament next week," he said.

De Klerk stunned the nation when he announced at the opening of parliament last year the lifting of a 30-year-old ban on the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa's main black opposition group, and the release a week later of jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela.

Plans to liberalise travel regulations in the Soviet Union this year have been of particular concern to neighbouring Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and they and officials in Western Europe fear a possible mass migration.

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Serbia and Slovenia hold crucial talks, Croatia fears crackdown

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (Agencies) — Serbia and Slovenia attempted Thursday to defuse tensions between their republics as Slovenia's ally Croatia remained wary of a possible federal military crackdown.

The Yugoslav News Agency Tanjug reported that Serbia's hard-line president, Slobodan Milosevic, met with Slovenian President Milan Kucan in talks aimed at solving the republics' political impasse.

Croatia and Slovenia, threatening secession, want to transform the Yugoslav Federation of six republics and two provinces into a loose confederation of independent states. Serbia wants Yugoslavia to remain centrally controlled.

The leaders met a day after

Yugoslav army officials accused Croatia's militia of preparing terrorist attacks on the federal military and ordered it to demobilise immediately.

The army statement, reported by Tanjug, said Croatia had mobilised different militia units "allegedly to prevent an army intervention."

Those Croatian units have been engaged in the "intensive tracking of army units, guarding of some buildings, jamming of communications and the preparation of terrorist actions against the military," the statement said.

It warned that if the Croatian reserve units do not demobilise immediately, the army would "step up combat readiness of its units" and take unspecified action against the republic.

Croatian President Franjo Tudjman said Wednesday the danger of an army intervention "has unfortunately not ceased" and that "if needed, the (Croatian) people would be called to defend freedom and democracy."

Croatia's Deputy Interior Minister Milan Brezak said in a statement that "the Croatian police is morally and technically equipped to carry out its task" and defend Croatia.

Yugoslavia's collective presidency pledged Tuesday there would be no military action to enforce federal orders to disarm "illegal paramilitary groups" in the republics. However, the eight-member leadership said "legal measures" would be taken against those who possess arms illegally.

French troops evacuate 194 foreigners in north Rwanda

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — French troops have evacuated nearly 200 foreigners, including Americans, from northwestern Rwanda amid renewed fighting between rebels and government forces, a diplomat said Thursday.

The 194 foreigners arrived in Rwanda's capital of Kigali in a convoy of 50 civilian vehicles at midnight Wednesday, according to a spokesman at the French embassy in Kigali. They were escorted by 30 truckloads of French troops, he said.

The spokesman, interviewed by telephone from Nairobi, said on condition of anonymity that the evacuees included Europeans, Americans and Canadians, but he could not give the breakdown of their nationalities.

He also had no details on casualties or the extent of the fighting.

The rebels accuse the government led by President Juvenal Habyarimana of corruption and regionalism and say they want to replace it with democracy.

The latest round of fighting began Tuesday when an estimated 400 rebels from the Rwandese Patriotic Front crossed the northwestern frontier from Uganda, according to the Belgian Foreign Ministry.

Johan Verbeke, a ministry spokesman in Brussels, said the

rebels overran some government outposts and pushed into Rubengeri, a major city 70 kilometres from Kigali. He said rebels controlled the border area and parts of the city.

The rebels took over the Rubengeri Jail, freeing prisoners, but they failed to push government troops out of their compound, Verbeke said.

Belgium is Rwanda's former colonial ruler and has led efforts to halt the fighting since it began on Oct. 1.

France, Belgium and Zaire sent soldiers to Rwanda to protect their nationals when the fighting broke out. Belgium and Zaire have since withdrawn their troops.

Rwanda's state radio said late Wednesday that the rebel incursion followed "unfruitful breakthroughs" in eastern Mutara region, but indicated heavy fighting continued.

It said a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew had been imposed in the northwestern region where the fighting was concentrated, and reiterated earlier charges that Uganda, Rwanda's northern neighbour, was aiding the rebels.

After a month of fighting, Belgium said it had brokered a ceasefire, but sporadic fighting has continued. Tuesday's attack was the biggest in a month.

In Communist Albania most people still travel by foot

By Stephen Weeks
Reuter

TIRANA — In Albania the main means of transport is by foot. A foreign visitor to Europe's poorest country is immediately struck by the almost total absence of vehicles on the streets of the capital Tirana.

People walk everywhere — along roads, through empty main squares and down the middle of the city's central avenue. There are no private cars, no taxis and few buses or bicycles.

Crowds stand at rural crossroads waiting for a decrepit bus and then push into a crush of people inside. Others simply strike out on foot, covering up to 20 kilometres in a day.

Albania, until December Europe's last bastion of Stalinism, is shedding four decades of fiercely-guarded isolation and is trying to come in line with the political and economic reforms sweeping other Eastern European states.

But at Tirana airport there is still a rigorous security check after you get off the plane.

Police use electronic scanners and X-ray machines to search visitors for suspicious equipment or literature deemed subversive by the authorities.

Soldiers in Soviet-style military coats and calf-high black leather boots are always in view, some guarding several ageing Soviet MiG-15 fighter planes which share the airport with civilian traffic.

Tourists are few and foreign journalists rare.

But the Communist authorities have been granting an increasing number of visas since this tiny Balkan state — ringed by rugged snow-capped mountains and home to about 3.3 million people — embarked on a new course of opening to the rest of Europe.

Statues and pictures of Enver Hoxha, who founded the Communist state in 1944 and relentlessly pursued a policy of strict isolation to guard the purity of his

revolution, still adorn factories and government offices.

The government marked its abandonment of Stalinism in December when it removed a statue of the former Soviet dictator from the capital.

For some of the restless young people who no longer fear being seen talking to foreigners in the streets of Tirana, Hoxha is the next symbol of the past that must go.

Many senior officials of the (Communist) Party of Labour now admit openly that something went terribly wrong with their Marxist-Leninist experiment.

The economy, which provides an annual per capita income of only \$350, is a shambles. Political turmoil is brewing and more than 20,000 Albanians have fled into exile in the past eight months.

For years armed border guards kept their compatriots at home and curious visitors at bay. They are no longer under orders to shoot to kill those who try to cross the border, and, coupled

with a mass exodus from southern Albanian villages populated by ethnic Greeks, many more look likely to flee.

Communist President Ramiz Alia is in a race against time, trying to catch up with democratic reforms in Eastern Europe to release some of the pent-up pressure for change. Opposition parties have been allowed and the country's first free elections will be held on March 31.

"We are at a very difficult moment," said a senior party official, who, like many in Albania, requested anonymity. "I don't rule out the possibility of an explosion unless we move quickly."

Factory workers lean out of broken windows in crumbling buildings. Rusty and broken equipment of all kinds is seen everywhere. From factory cranes to the oil rigs in the south.

Tirana, with a population of 200,000 and other main towns are dominated by drab apartment blocks. People sometimes own

black and white televisions but there are few other electrical appliances.

Almost all work is done by human hand and muscle.

When Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis visited earlier this month, workers were out at first light to sweep the muddy 30-kilometre road from the airport to Tirana with bundles of pine branches.

Groups of peasants march along roads to work in the fields, their shovels slung over their shoulders.

The fields, producing Albania's food, and billboards, with olive trees and vineyards, were collectivised by Hoxha. Unlike the factories, they appear well-tended and productive despite three years of drought.

But the countryside also reflects the xenophobia which gripped Albania under Hoxha's rule before he died in 1985.

The fields around Tirana are dotted with hundreds of small concrete machine-gun posts. The

posts, some crumbling and many overgrown, are for opposing any foreign invasion.

Horse power is widely used, with roughly-built wooden carts pulled along the roads transporting coal, woods, farm produce or workers to fields and factories.

Most of Albania's heating comes from a soft, pungent local coal — lignite — or wood. In the evenings men and women can be seen foraging throughout the countryside for firewood.

Officials acknowledge Albania must follow Eastern Europe and move to a multi-party democracy to head off the kind of explosive, and bloody, revolution which swept away Romania's President Nicolae Ceausescu in December 1989.

They have plans to transform the centralised economy to something akin to a free market, with foreign joint ventures in industry and opening the country — and its still well-sealed borders — to tourism and trade with the rest of Europe.